

Out Online

The Experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual
and Transgender Youth on the Internet



A Report from the Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network
In Partnership with CiPHR and CCRC

Out Online

The Experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual
and Transgender Youth on the Internet

By:

GLSEN[®]

In partnership with:

CiPHR

Center for *Innovative*
Public Health Research



PROJECT STAFF:

Neal A. Palmer, Ph.D.
Joseph G. Kosciw, Ph.D.
Emily A. Greytak, Ph.D.
Michele L. Ybarra, Ph.D.
Josephine Korchmaros, Ph.D.
Kimberly J. Mitchell, Ph.D.

National Headquarters

90 Broad Street, 2nd floor
New York, NY 10004
Ph: 212.727.0135
Fax: 212.727.0254

DC Policy Office

1012 14th Street, NW, Suite 1105
Washington, DC 20005
Ph: 202.347.7780
Fax: 202.347.7781

glsen@glsen.org
www.glsen.org

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The Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network is the leading national education organization focused on ensuring safe schools for all lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students. Established nationally in 1995, GLSEN envisions a world in which every child learns to respect and accept all people, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression.

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Preface

Youth growing up today are unlikely to remember a time before the Internet. For many of them, the Internet may not even seem separate from everyday life, as it felt during the initial years of its development. Although reflection on generational change is an enduring pastime for adults, the prevalence and pervasiveness of new technologies — and the speed at which they are incorporated into our everyday lives — really do mark a fundamental transformation in the adolescent experience. For lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) youth, who experience stigma and disproportionate harassment in school, these new technologies offer both benefits and risks. *Out Online: The Experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Youth on the Internet* provides an in-depth account of how LGBT young people navigate a space that can be both a critical lifeline and a site of vulnerability.

Out Online is the latest chapter in GLSEN's growing body of research into the experiences of LGBT students, expanding our collective understanding beyond the boundaries of classrooms and hallways and the confines of the school day. For more than a decade, GLSEN has documented the high rates of bullying, harassment and bias that LGBT youth experience in school settings. Unfortunately, while the Internet has transformed the lives of LGBT youth — and youth in general—in a number of ways, it has merely reinforced and intensified these common experiences. Taunts like “fag” and “dyke” haunt LGBT youth on their Facebook pages and email inboxes once school is out, just as they echo at school throughout the day. As we have observed for more than a decade with school-based victimization, Out Online reveals that online and text message-based bullying and harassment are also associated with poorer academic performance and psychological health.

Fortunately, this study also offers significant sources of hope. LGBT youth adapt the Internet to their specific needs around sexual orientation and gender identity development, as well as around the need for social support. Online spaces also offer them a forum to raise LGBT issues in a public or semi-public arena, which may be crucial to their development given the resistance they face to raising these issues in school.

Out Online documents the support that LGBT youth derive from their Internet use, a critical resource about which educators, caretakers, policymakers, and practitioners should be more aware. However, the report also highlights continued unmet needs for LGBT youth, who turn to the Internet for information and support when their schools do not provide medically-accurate, age-appropriate health and sexuality information, for example, or access to school-based supports like GSAs or inclusive curricular materials.

The importance of the Internet for LGBT youth and their peers overall also poses a challenge to educators, who must help students learn how to seek out and identify reliable sources of information and safe sources of support amidst the deluge of potential connections online. It is also a challenge for youth advocates and LGBT community organizations, who must continue to increase the availability of in-person support while developing and enhancing online spaces and resources for these youth.

As we look to the future, it is clear that the Internet and digital devices will continue to transform the way youth connect and communicate, and the way we educate. We can only hope that someday LGBT youth will be unlikely to remember a time when their experiences online were anything other than positive.



Eliza Byard, Ph.D.
Executive Director
GLSEN

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Executive Summary

For 23 years, GLSEN (the Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network) has worked to make schools safer for all students, regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. Teenagers are much more “wired” than they were when GLSEN was founded in 1990, and this study explores how new connections online have offered new avenues for bullying and harassment, as well as new possibilities for supportive resources that promote positive well-being.

Recent media coverage of cyberbullying illustrates how the Internet and related technologies can be used to harass or intimidate other people and contribute to many of the same negative consequences as in-person bullying and harassment, including lower psychological well-being and greater suicidal ideation. Studies of bullying and harassment routinely find that LGBT youth experience higher levels of victimization than their non-LGBT peers. This study provides evidence that lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) youth also face substantial levels of bullying online.

Fortunately, the Internet may also provide access to beneficial resources for LGBT youth. Historically, LGBT people have been some of the earliest adopters of the Internet and social media. Due to their stigmatization in broader society and at times, a lack of supportive peers, many LGBT youth may turn to online spaces for support, which potentially offer them their first opportunity to connect with other LGBT people. In addition, the Internet may afford LGBT youth the opportunity to access otherwise unavailable information about their sexual and gender identities. Online spaces may also permit a wider range of civic engagement from a more diverse group of participants, including from LGBT youth. Access to and use of these resources may also promote better well-being among LGBT youth, perhaps particularly if they allow LGBT youth to be more open about identifying as LGBT.

Although research on LGBT youth has grown considerably over the past decade, this study offers the most comprehensive understanding to date of the experiences of LGBT youth online. It also is one of the few studies to place online experiences into the larger context of young people’s lives, allowing direct comparisons of experiences online to those offline. It examines potential negative influences online, such as cyberbullying and other types of victimization, but also assesses potential positive features of online spaces, including their role in fostering sexual/gender identity development, social support, and civic engagement. This study also identifies a number of factors associated with LGBT youth behavior online, including demographic characteristics such as gender, race/ethnicity, and locale; as well as factors such as outness and access to resources offline. Finally, this study concludes with suggestions for advocates, policymakers, and practitioners to improve the lives of LGBT youth.

Methods

Data used in this study come from the *Teen Health & Technology* survey conducted by Harris Interactive Inc. on behalf of the Center for Innovative Public Health Research (CiPHR), GLSEN, and the Crimes against Children Research Center at the University of Hampshire. The study was supported by Award Number R01 HD057191 from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, and a survey was conducted online between August 2010 and January 2011, with a total sample of 5,680 U.S. 13-18 year olds. When examining differences between non-LGBT and LGBT youth, we draw from this full sample of 5,680 youth. However, this report primarily examines the specific experiences of the 1,960 LGBT youth included in the dataset.

Key Findings

General Rates of Use

Online spaces may offer LGBT youth safer opportunities to express who they are, as well as provide access to resources that are not available in person. Accordingly, use of online spaces and resources was more prevalent among LGBT youth than non-LGBT youth:

- LGBT youth spent an average of 5 hours per day online, approximately 45 minutes more than non-LGBT youth in this study.

Bullying/Harassment and Safety

LGBT youth frequently reported feeling unsafe and being bullied at school and in other environments where they frequently spend time. Much of the victimization they experienced occurred online or via text message:

- LGBT youth were nearly three times as likely as non-LGBT youth to say they had been bullied or harassed online (42% vs. 15%) and twice as likely to say they had been bullied via text message (27% vs. 13%).
- LGBT youth were as likely to report feeling unsafe online (27%) as they were at school (30%) and while traveling to and from school (29%).

- One in four LGBT youth (26%) said they had been bullied online specifically because of their sexual orientation or gender expression in the past year, and one in five (18%) said they had experienced bullying and harassment for these reasons via text message.

In addition to these forms of bullying and harassment, a number of LGBT youth reported experiencing sexual harassment online or via text message:

- One in three (32%) LGBT respondents said they had been sexually harassed online in the past year. One in four LGBT youth (25%) said they had been sexually harassed via text message.
- LGBT youth were four times as likely as non-LGBT youth to say they had been sexually harassed online (32% vs. 8%) and three times as likely to say they had been sexually harassed via text message (25% vs. 8%).

Bullying and harassment online was associated with several negative academic and psychosocial outcomes:

- Youth who experienced both online/text and in-person bullying and harassment reported lower GPAs, lower self-esteem, and higher levels of depression than youth who were bullied only in person or online/text, or not at all.

LGBT Resources and Information-Seeking Online

LGBT youth may not be provided with LGBT-relevant health information in their schools, homes, and communities and thus, turn to online resources to find information on health and sexuality topics:

- LGBT youth were five times as likely to have searched for information online on sexuality or sexual attraction as non-LGBT youth (62% vs. 12%).
- LGBT youth were also more likely to have searched for health and medical information compared to non-LGBT youth (81% vs. 46%).
- LGBT youth were also four times as likely to have searched for information on HIV/AIDS and other STIs (sexually transmitted infections) compared to non-LGBT youth (19% vs. 5%).

Peer Supports

Online spaces may offer LGBT youth expanded opportunities for social support, perhaps particularly if they lack meaningful connections to other LGBT people in person:

- LGBT youth reported knowing substantially more online friends than non-LGBT youth: 50% of LGBT respondents reported having at least one close online friend, compared to only 19% of non-LGBT youth.
- LGBT youth rated their online friends as more supportive than non-LGBT youth rated their online friends.

LGBT youth also used the Internet to connect with other LGBT people specifically:

- Two-thirds of LGBT youth (62%) had used the Internet to connect with other LGBT people in the past year.
- Half (or more than half) of LGBT youth who lacked LGBT peers, close LGBT friends, GSAs (Gay-Straight Alliances), or LGBT community groups had used the Internet to connect with other LGBT people, providing evidence of the importance of online resources for LGBT youth who may lack relevant resources elsewhere.

Online spaces may also offer LGBT youth new opportunities for being open about their LGBT identities:

- More than one in ten LGBT youth (14%) said that they had first disclosed their LGBT identity to someone online.
- One in four LGBT youth (29%) said they were more out online than in person.

The Internet provided LGBT youth with an opportunity to make meaningful connections online, even if they were not out in person:

- More than half (52%) of LGBT respondents who were not out to peers in person had used the Internet to connect with other LGBT people.

Civic Participation

The Internet may enable greater civic participation from marginalized groups, including LGBT youth:

- LGBT youth reported high rates of civic engagement online, including having taken part in an online community that supports a cause or issue (77%), gotten the word out about a cause or an issue (76%), written a blog or posted comments on another blog about a cause or an issue (68%), and used the Internet to participate in or recruit people for an event or activity (51%).
- More than half (54%) of LGBT youth had used text messages in the past year to support or get the word out about an issue or a cause, and just under half (42%) had participated in or encouraged others to participate in an in-person activity or event.
- For each form of online or text-based engagement, LGBT youth participated at rates that were approximately twice those of non-LGBT youth.

Online engagement may be associated with or encourage broader participation among LGBT youth. It may also provide opportunities for engagement that are unavailable in person:

- The overwhelming majority of LGBT youth in this study (68%) had engaged in volunteering as well as online/text-based political activities in the past year.
- Nonetheless, one in five LGBT youth (22%) said they had only been engaged civically online or via text message in the past year, suggesting that Internet technologies may serve as an important resource and foster civic participation for some LGBT youth.

Differences by Individual and Contextual Factors

LGBT youth constitute a diverse population and may have different needs related to their personal characteristics. For instance, research suggests that LGBT youth may exhibit different patterns of LGBT identity development by race/ethnicity. As such, online spaces and resources may be more prevalent among and more helpful for LGBT youth of some races/ethnicities than for others:

- White LGBT youth experienced greater levels of online and text-based bullying and harassment than LGBT youth of other races/ethnicities.
- Asian American and Latino/a LGBT youth were more likely to have searched online for information on sexuality and sexual attraction than White and African American LGBT youth. In addition, African American, Asian American, and Latino/a LGBT youth were more likely to have searched for information on STIs online than White LGBT youth.

Prevailing gender norms and differential access to relevant information may also encourage different experiences and uses of online spaces and resources among different gender identities:

- Transgender, cisgender¹ LGB females, and youth with “other” genders reported higher levels of online victimization compared to cisgender male GB youth.
- Cisgender male GB youth were more likely to have searched online for information on sexuality or sexual attraction compared to cisgender LGB females; and also more likely than cisgender LGB females to have searched for information on HIV/AIDS and other STIs.
- Transgender youth and youth with “other” genders were more likely to have searched online for information about sexuality or sexual attraction than cisgender female LGB youth.
- Transgender youth were more likely than other LGB youth to have searched for health and medical information and information on STIs, perhaps because of a lack of relevant information in schools.
- In addition, cisgender GB males, transgender, and “other” gender LGB youth were more likely than cisgender LGB females to have used the Internet to connect with other LGBT people online.

In addition, research indicates that context, including rurality and urbanicity, influences LGBT youth’s experiences and access to supportive resources. In this study:

- LGBT youth in rural areas spent less time online than suburban and urban youth, and they also depended on school computers for access to the Internet to a greater extent than youth in suburban areas of the country.
- LGBT youth in rural areas experienced substantially higher levels of victimization online and via text message compared to LGBT youth in suburban and urban areas.
- LGBT youth in suburban areas were most likely to have searched for information online regarding sexuality or sexual attraction, health, and STIs.
- Youth in rural areas were more likely than youth in suburban and urban areas to say they were more out online than offline.
- Suburban LGBT youth also exhibited the highest rates of online political participation.

¹ The term “cisgender” refers to a person whose gender identity is aligned with their sex assigned at birth (e.g., someone who is not transgender).

Conclusion and Recommendations

This report greatly expands our understanding of the experiences of LGBT youth online. These findings demonstrate a clear need for greater attention by researchers, policymakers, and practitioners to the experiences of LGBT youth online, and a continued commitment to make schools and other places safer and more inclusive for LGBT youth. Anti-LGBT bullying is prevalent in many areas of the country, and as this report shows, its presence online must be acknowledged as well. Such experiences have the potential to contribute negatively toward the school environment and learning opportunities. This report suggests that anti-bullying/harassment policies may need to do more to protect youth against online and text-based harassment by their academic peers. In addition, educator training and prevention programs targeted towards students may help lower the prevalence of these forms of victimization.

Substantial numbers of LGBT youth also reported searching for information related to sexuality or sexual attraction, general health, or STIs online. Such findings point to the need for more comprehensive, LGBT-inclusive sexual education programs both in and outside of schools for youth across the country. Youth could potentially acquire wrong or misleading information online, however. Thus, practitioners may find it useful to direct LGBT youth to web resources they have vetted or to other nationally endorsed, reliable sources.

Many LGBT youth also go online for social support, whether to reinforce their existing, in-person networks of support or to expand them. Youth who are not out in person, and youth who feel less comfortable identifying as LGBT in their schools or communities, may be especially reliant on online resources. In addition, a substantial number of youth said that they only participated in civic activities online, suggesting that online spaces may serve as a safe venue for engagement for many LGBT youth.

In this study, some individual and contextual factors (i.e., race, gender, and locale) were associated with different patterns of online behavior. For instance, Asian American LGBT youth were the most likely to participate in civic activities online. Transgender and male GB youth were most likely to have searched for LGBT-relevant information online. Rural youth were more likely to be more out online than in person, compared to urban and suburban youth. As such, practitioners may find it helpful to encourage some youth more than others to connect with resources online. In addition, given the stigma that LGBT people face in many schools and communities, teachers, parents, and other adults who work with youth may recommend the use of online spaces to support civic participation among LGBT youth.

Finally, although access to the Internet is increasing, gaps in access remain. This study finds that rural LGBT youth spend less time online via a computer at home, and more time online via a computer at school, than LGBT youth in other areas of the country. Unfortunately, GLSEN's recent report *Strengths and Silences: The School Experiences of LGBT Students in Rural and Small Town Schools* found that rural LGBT youth demonstrated lower access to LGBT-related content via school-based, Internet-equipped computers than suburban and urban youth (e.g., because of Internet firewalls, filters, and other restrictive computer 'protections'). Thus, researchers and practitioners must acknowledge the importance of schools as sites of resource access for some youth, and make sure computers in all schools can be used to access supportive resources, including those that are LGBT-inclusive. Together, these recommendations can help make schools and other spaces safer for all youth, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.

Introduction

When GLSEN (the Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network) was founded 23 years ago, the Internet was still in its early stages and few could have predicted how central it would become in our everyday lives. Originally, online and offline spaces were largely discussed as distinct entities: offline as “real life”, and online as something else.¹ Today, the lines between online and offline are increasingly blurred, as one can be online in nearly any location with the advent of Internet-equipped cell and smart phones.²

Youth and young adults have been the primary drivers and adopters of social media³, and they continue to exhibit the highest levels of connectivity in the US.⁴ As a result of public and private investment, fewer and fewer people in the United States can be said to lack access to the Internet altogether⁵, such that today, 95% of youth aged 12 to 17 report having access to the Internet.⁶ This report explores how new connections online have offered new avenues for bullying and harassment, as well as new possibilities for supportive resources and positive well-being. Recent research has demonstrated that cyberbullying can result in the same negative consequences as in-person bullying and harassment, including lower psychological well-being and greater suicidal ideation.⁷ In response, several states have included cyberbullying in their anti-bullying laws, though the application of these laws is unclear outside of the school setting.⁸

Online spaces may provide potential positive spaces and resources, beyond facilitating negative experiences such as bullying. Youth who feel marginalized by characteristics such as race/ethnicity and sexuality have expressed feeling more accepted online than offline.⁹ Despite the blurring between online and offline spaces, the Internet may be distinct from offline spaces in some respects, namely due to the possibility of obscuring one's identity and/or the potential of greater flexibility and control over how one presents oneself.¹⁰ For LGBT youth, the Internet may offer new opportunities to express oneself free from the harassment that might

take place offline and the opportunity to locate other LGBT youth.¹¹ In turn, use of the Internet for LGBT-affirming purposes may lead to a more positive sexual or gender identity, and hence result in decreased loneliness and improved psychological health.¹² For many LGBT youth, online spaces offer one's first opportunity to connect to other LGBT people.¹³

In addition to individual identity exploration and expression, online spaces may offer LGBT people greater opportunities for civic engagement (e.g., political or social activism). Barriers that prevent or dampen traditional forms of participation — including a lack of time, income, and civic skills — may be overcome in a space that permits greater flexibility to participants and greater access to the political process.¹⁴ Moreover, topics and issues often excluded from public discourse — such as those that are LGBT-related — may be permitted in a space that encourages a greater diversity of participants. LGBT persons have historically been early adopters, and frequent users, of new social media sites and tools.¹⁵ Online spaces may provide opportunities for civic participation that are not available in person, thereby helping LGBT youth develop civic skills.

Although research on LGBT youth has grown considerably over the past decade, little research to date has examined the online experiences of LGBT youth specifically.¹⁶ This research report offers the most comprehensive understanding to date of LGBT youth online as it examines not only potential negative influences online, such as cyberbullying and other types of victimization, but also assesses potential positive features of online spaces, including their role in fostering LGBT identity development, social support, and civic engagement. Furthermore, this report examines the interrelationships between online and offline resources, especially the availability and use of LGBT-related positive resources, such as social support and access to LGBT-relevant information. This report also examines how certain demographic (e.g., race/ethnicity and gender) and locational factors (e.g., urbanicity, rurality) might be associated with varying rates of online activity for LGBT youth.

Methods

Data used in this report come from the *Teen Health & Technology* survey conducted by Harris Interactive Inc. on behalf of the Center for Innovative Public Health Research (CiPHR), GLSEN, and the Crimes against Children Research Center at the University of Hampshire. The study was supported by Award Number R01 HD057191 from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development and was conducted between August 2010 and January 2011. A sample of 5,907 U.S. 13-18 year olds was surveyed online. The sample was obtained from two sources: 1) the Harris Poll Online (HPOL) opt-in panel (n=3,989 respondents); and 2) through referrals from GLSEN (n=1,918 respondents).

Respondents were invited through password protected email invitations to participate in a survey about their 'online experiences'. Invitations for the HPOL panel were emailed to a stratified random sample of U.S. residents among four groups:

- 13 to 18 year olds,
- Adults with a 13 to 17 year old in their household,
- Adults with a child under 18 in their household, and
- A general population of adults.

In the cases where parents or other adults received the email invitation, the invitation noted that the survey was intended for a 13 to 18 year old in the household and asked the adult to forward the survey link to the teenager.

Because of the interest in examining the online experiences of LGBT youth, an oversample of LGBT youth was surveyed through a public (non-password protected) link. This oversample was recruited through GLSEN's referral efforts. GLSEN recruited most respondents through the following two methods:

- Emails sent with the survey link to their distribution list, and
- Publicizing the survey through targeted advertisements on Facebook.

In order to increase the accuracy of the data, Harris implemented a variety of measures to detect fraudulent respondents. The measures included: examining length of time for respondent to take the survey, cookie detection (i.e., evidence of having taken the survey previously), straight-lining (i.e., giving the same answer to a series of survey questions), and illogical responses (i.e., self-reported age at the beginning of the survey was more than one year different than self-reported age asked at the end of the survey). This process eliminated 227 respondents, resulting in a final sample of 5,680 13-18 year olds.

When examining differences between non-LGBT and LGBT youth, we draw from this full sample of 5,680 youth. However, this report primarily examines the specific experiences of the 1,960 LGBT youth included in the dataset.¹⁷ These LGBT youth were between 13 and 18 years of age, and most identified as gay or lesbian (63%). In addition, one third (33%) of students described their race as something other than White; nine in ten students (89%) attended public schools.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of LGBT Survey Respondents (N=1,960)		
Gender Identity ¹⁸	%	n
Female (cisgender) ¹⁹	43.1%	(844)
Male (cisgender)	35.6%	(698)
Transgender	9.6%	(189)
Another gender identity	11.7%	(229)
Sexual Orientation		
Gay/Lesbian	62.9%	(1232)
Bisexual	33.4%	(655)
Heterosexual (and transgender)	0.4%	(7)
Queer, Questioning, Other	3.3%	(65)
Race ²⁰		
Asian or Pacific Islander	3.9%	(77)
Native American, American Indian, or Alaska Native	1.2%	(24)
White	66.1%	(1296)
African American or Black	5.1%	(100)
Hispanic or Latino/a	14.9%	(292)
Multiracial	7.1%	(140)
Other	1.6%	(31)
Grade		
6th	0.2%	(3)
7th	3.8%	(74)
8th	10.4%	(203)
9th	15.2%	(297)
10th	21.5%	(422)
11th	25.7%	(503)
12th	18.7%	(367)
Not in School	1.3%	(26)
Age (mean)	16.17	

Table 2. Family and School Characteristics of LGBT Survey Respondents (N=1,960)		
School Location	%	n
Urban	33.5%	(656)
Suburban	39.0%	(764)
Small Town/Rural	27.6%	(540)
School Type		
Public	89.4%	(1729)
Private, Parochial, Religious	8.4%	(163)
Home school	2.2%	(42)
Parents' Income		
High	17.8%	(349)
Middle	57.4%	(1120)
Low	25.1%	(491)

Results

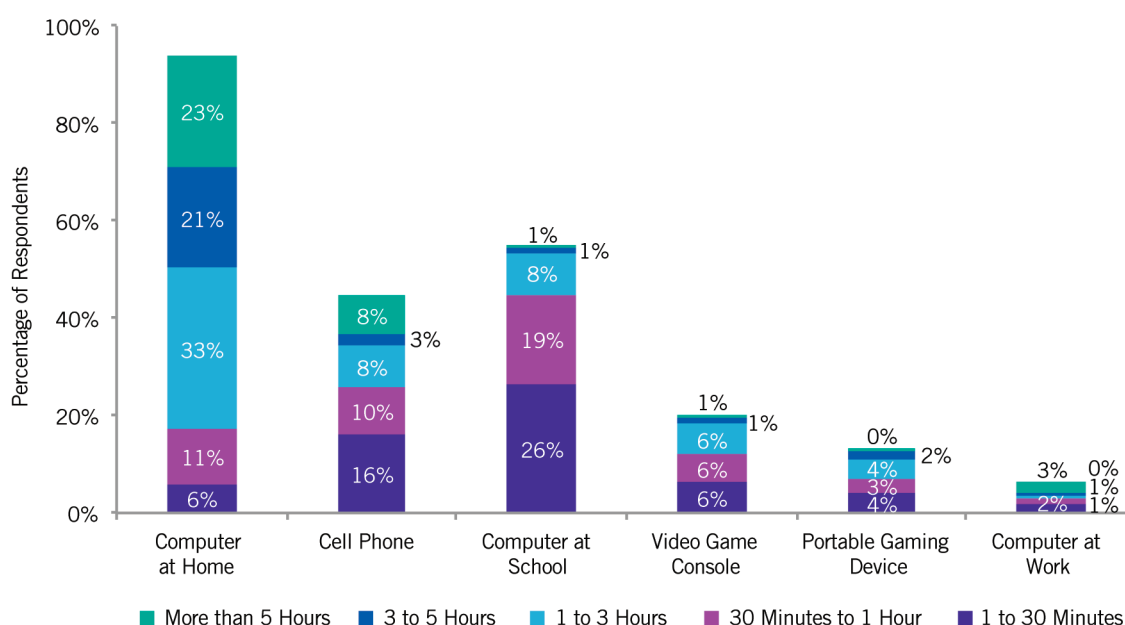
General Rates of Internet Use

Over the past two decades, personal computers have become increasingly affordable, and access to the Internet almost universally available. Youth in this survey were asked about how much time they spend online using various devices. LGBT youth spent an average of 5 hours online each day — approximately 45 minutes more than non-LGBT youth in this study — via a variety of different electronic devices.²¹ As shown in Figure 1, the most frequent place LGBT youth went online was via a computer at home: 94% of LGBT youth reported that they spent at least some time online per day using a computer at home, and 77% reported they did so for at least an hour.²²

More than half of LGBT youth (55%) said they spent at least some time online each day via a computer at school, but they generally did so for less than an hour per day. Spending time online via a cell phone was less common than via a computer at school: 45% of LGBT youth said they spent time online via a cell phone. However, youth who went online using a cell phone spent a considerable amount of time doing so: 19% of these youth said they spent at least an hour online per day via their cell phones.

Although it was less common, one in five LGBT youth (20%) reported spending at least some time online per day via a video game console, such as an Xbox 360 or PS3, and another 13% reported doing so via a portable gaming device, such as a Nintendo 3DS. Only 7% of LGBT youth reported spending time online via a computer at work.²³

Figure 1. Time Spent Online with Various Electronic Devices by LGBT Youth



Bullying/Harassment and Safety

LGBT youth are frequent targets of biased language, bullying, and harassment in school.²⁴ The growth of the Internet and new technologies has, unfortunately, made new forms of bullying and harassment possible. Youth in this study were asked how safe they felt online and in various in-person settings.²⁵ They were also asked whether and where they had been bullied (i.e., in school, to and from school, at home, at work, in a place of worship), and the mode in which they had been bullied or harassed (i.e., in person, online, via text message, or via phone call). Consistent with findings from GLSEN's National School Climate Survey²⁶, although LGBT youth were most often the victims of harassment at school, this bullying continued after the school day ended via the Internet and text messaging for many youth. Moreover, both online and offline experiences of bullying and harassment had negative consequences on psychological and school outcomes.

Feelings of Safety

LGBT youth commonly report that they feel unsafe in the school context. To better understand perceptions of safety across a variety of contexts, survey participants were asked how safe they felt (i.e., whether they generally felt safe, unsafe, or neither safe nor unsafe) in the places they spend most of

their time (i.e., in school, to and from school, online, at home, at work, and at places of worship). Youth in this study commonly said they did not feel safe (i.e., said they felt extremely unsafe, somewhat unsafe, or neither safe nor unsafe) when they were online (27%), about the same percentage who said they did not feel safe at school (29%) or when traveling to and from school (30%; see Figure 2).²⁷ A sizeable minority of youth (34%) also did not feel safe²⁸ in places of worship, perhaps because LGBT people are stigmatized in or systematically excluded from many religious traditions.²⁹

More LGBT youth reported feeling unsafe than non-LGBT youth across all locations. For instance, LGBT youth were twice as likely as non-LGBT youth to not feel safe at school (29% vs. 14%) and on their way to and from school (30% vs. 15%), four times as likely to not feel safe at a place of worship (34% vs. 8%), and three times as likely to not feel safe at home (16% vs. 6%). Although differences between LGBT and non-LGBT youth were smaller for the online and work environments, LGBT youth were nonetheless more likely to not feel safe online (27% vs. 21%) and at work (19% vs. 15%).³⁰

Experiences of Bullying and Harassment

Experiences of bullying or harassment serve as one reason youth might feel unsafe in certain contexts.³¹ With the expanded use of the Internet and other technologies, bullying and harassment no longer need occur solely in person or via a phone call.

Figure 2. Feelings of Safety in Various Locations among LGBT Youth

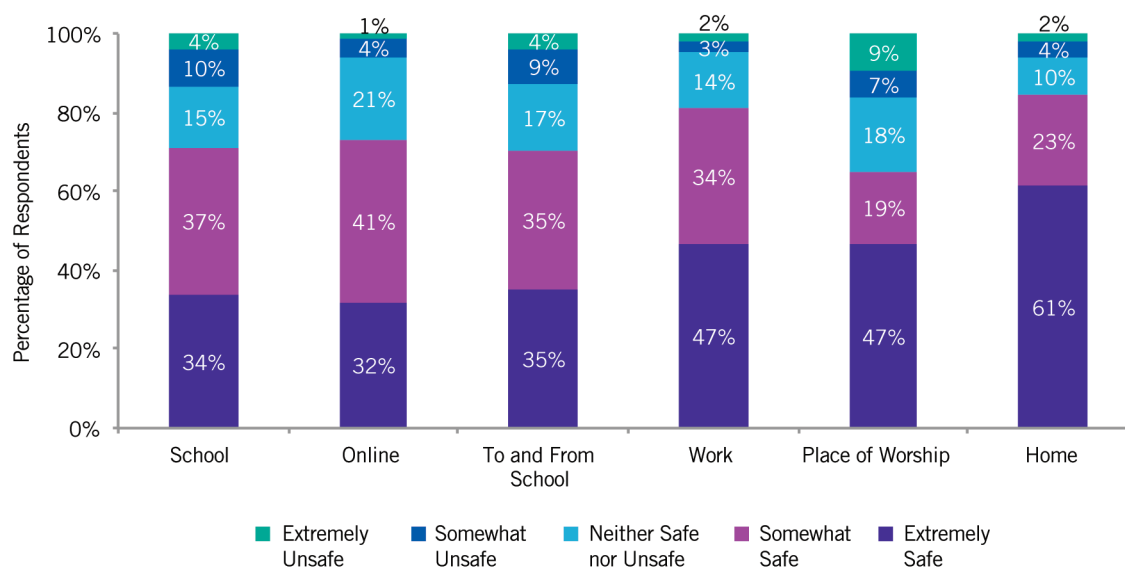
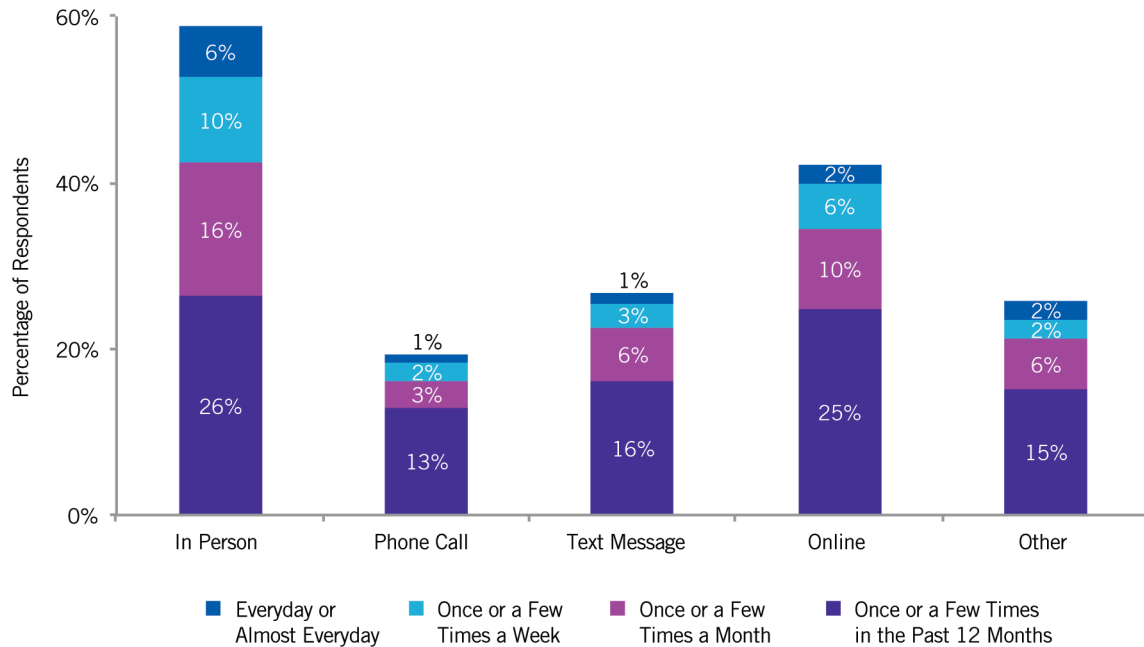


Figure 3. Frequency and Mode of Bullying and Harassment among LGBT Youth



Although LGBT youth most commonly reported that they had been bullied or harassed in person³², a large number also reported that they were regularly bullied or harassed via a number of other media, as shown in Figure 3. More than four in ten LGBT youth (42%) said they had been bullied or harassed online, with 8% saying that it happened at least once a week during the past year. In addition, more than one quarter (27%) said they had been harassed at least once in the past year via text message. Fewer respondents (20%) said they had been bullied or harassed via a (voice) phone call, which may be a reflection of declining use of the telephone overall³³, but also may be because harassment via phone call is not as easily anonymous or indirect. Overall, 70% of LGBT youth said they had been bullied at least once in the past year via at least one mode, including 68% who said they had been bullied or harassed in person, online, or via text message in the past year (see Figure 4); 41% of LGBT youth had experienced bullying and harassment both online/text and in person at least once in the past year; 9% had been bullied only online or via text message, as shown in Figure 4.³⁴

Figure 4. Mode of Bullying and Harassment among LGBT Youth

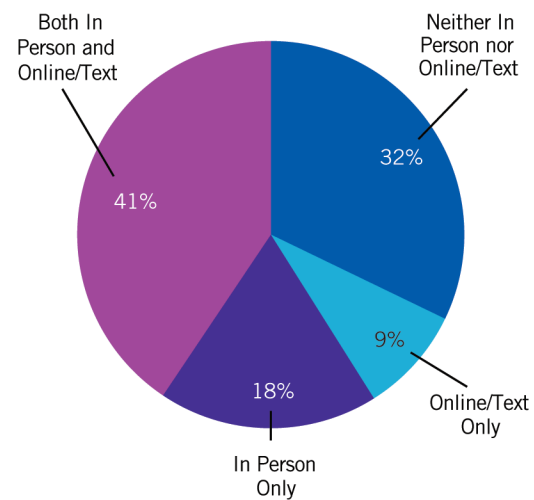
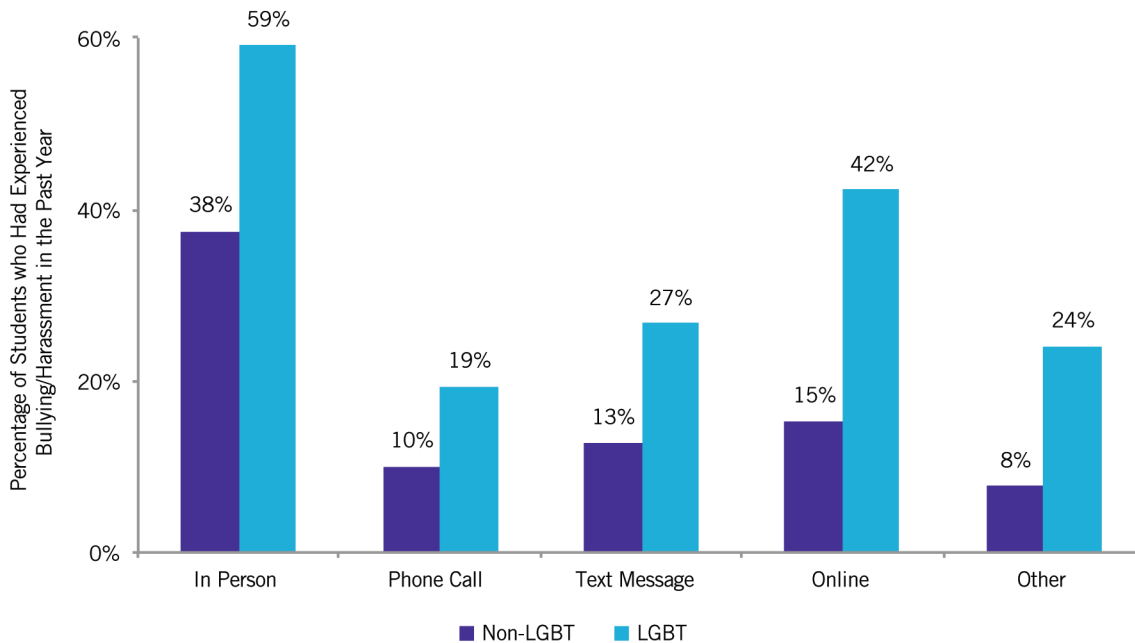


Figure 5. Rates and Mode of Bullying and Harassment among LGBT and Non-LGBT Youth



For each mode, LGBT youth reported higher rates of bullying and harassment than non-LGBT youth, as shown in Figure 5.³⁵ For instance, LGBT youth were twice as likely as non-LGBT youth to say they had been bullied via text message (27% vs. 13%) or phone call (19% vs. 10%). They were nearly three times as likely to say they had been bullied or harassed online (42% vs. 15%). In addition, they were substantially more likely to say they had been bullied in person (59% vs. 38%).

Anti-LGBT Bullying and Harassment

Bullying frequently targets a personal or social characteristic, thereby reflecting an underlying bias against a person or group of people. Prior research has found that LGBT youth most commonly experience bullying and harassment due to their sexual orientation and gender expression³⁶, and nearly three in four respondents (71%) in this study reported having been bullied specifically because of their sexual orientation, gender expression, or both in the past year.

Youth were asked about the places in which they were the targets of bias-based bullying and harassment. Given the ubiquitous wireless Internet access available to many youth (as well as adults), youth can be online almost anywhere and able to

text another person from almost any location.³⁷ Thus, bullying behavior online might occur not just via a personal computer at home, but could increasingly occur at school or in other everyday settings via computer and text message.

The expansion of communication media has had the unfortunate consequence of facilitating bullying via new means. Although some school authorities take measures to limit cell phone use in schools³⁸, one in 10 LGBT youth (8%) said they had been bullied for these reasons via text message while they were at school in the past year (see Figure 6). Another 7% of LGBT youth said they had been bullied or harassed for these reasons via text message while they were on their way to or from school.

These tools also enable bias-based bullying and harassment even outside of the school context. One in four (24%) LGBT youth said they had been bullied online because of their sexual orientation or gender expression while they were at home, and another 15% said they had been bullied for these reasons via text message when they were at home at least once in the last year (see also Figure 6).³⁹ Overall, 30% of LGBT youth had experienced bullying due to their sexual orientation or gender expression via text message or online while at home.

Figure 6. Location and Mode of Bullying Targeting Sexual Orientation or Gender Expression among LGBT Youth

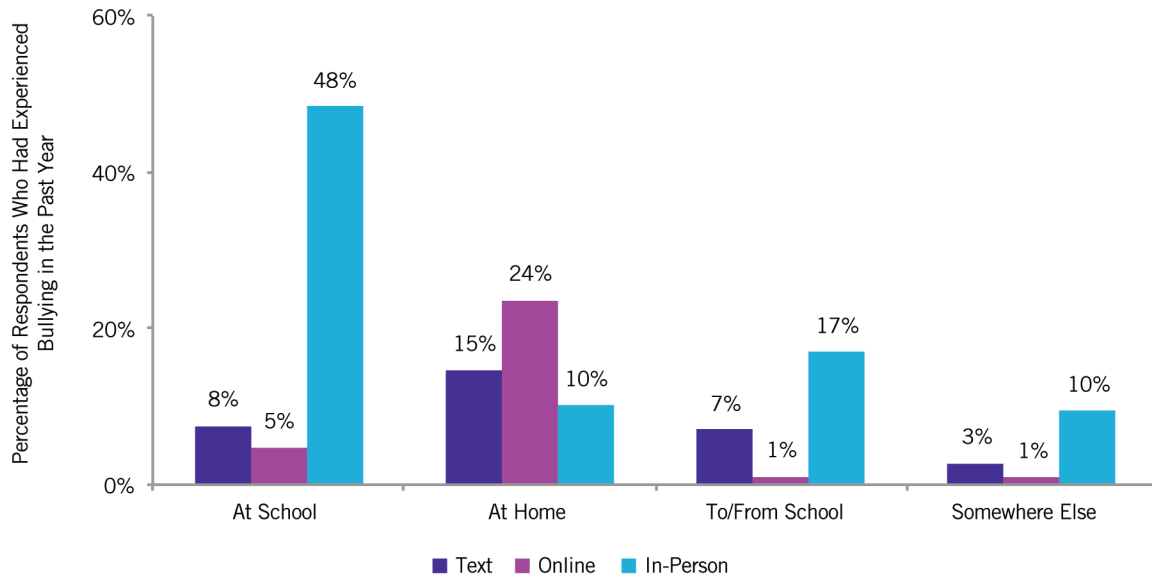
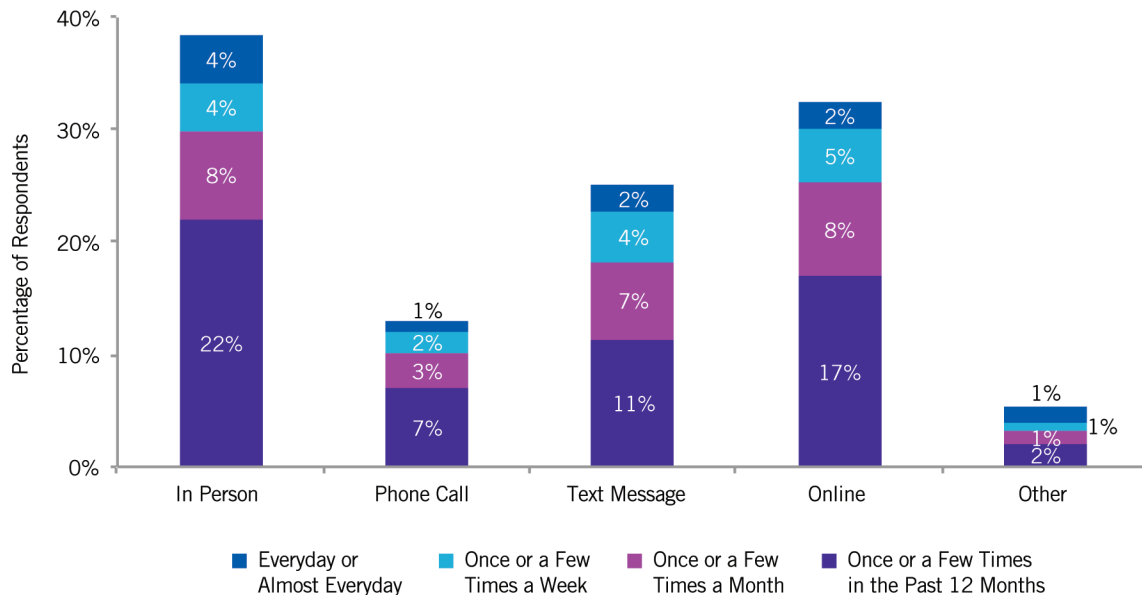


Figure 7. Frequency and Mode of Sexual Harassment among LGBT Youth

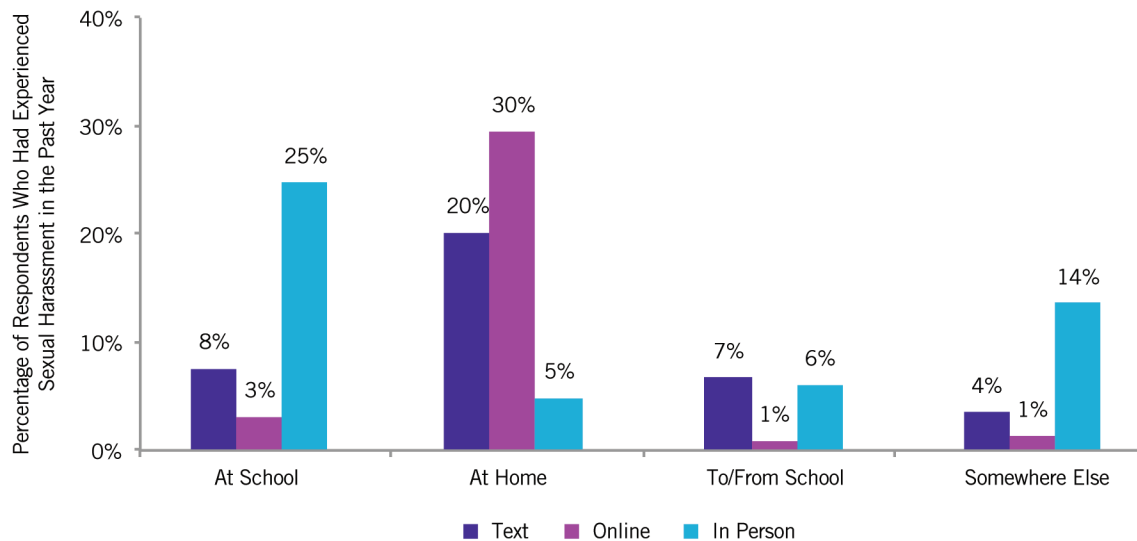


Sexual Harassment

Youth in this study were also asked whether they had been sexually harassed in the past year, including having sexual remarks made toward them or about them, being the recipient of unwelcome sexual solicitations, or being asked sexual questions about themselves. As with other forms of bullying and

harassment, the spread of the Internet and related technologies has expanded the range of tools that can be utilized for sexual harassment. One in three (32%) LGBT respondents said they had been sexually harassed online, with 7% saying it occurred at least weekly, as shown in Figure 7. In addition, one in four LGBT youth (25%) said they had been sexually harassed via text message in the past year.

Figure 8. Location and Mode of Sexual Harassment among LGBT Youth



Youth were also asked about the locations (e.g., at school, at home) and mode (e.g., in person, online) in which they had experienced sexual harassment. In contrast to bullying and harassment targeting sexual orientation or gender expression, LGBT youth were more likely to have experienced sexual harassment while at home than while at school: 36% of youth had experienced sexual harassment via at least one mode while at home, including 30% who had experienced it online and 20% via text message (see Figure 8). One in four LGBT youth (26%) had experienced sexual harassment via at least one mode while at school, primarily in person.⁴⁰

For every mode, LGBT youth reported higher rates of sexual harassment than non-LGBT youth.⁴¹ For instance, LGBT youth were approximately three times as likely as non-LGBT youth to say they had been sexually harassed in person (38% vs. 14%), via phone call (13% vs. 5%), or text message (25% vs. 8%). They were four times as likely to say they had been sexually harassed online (32% vs. 8%).

Effects of Online and Text-based Bullying

Research routinely finds that experiences of bullying and harassment at school are associated with a range of negative outcomes, including lower academic achievement, lower self-esteem, and higher depression.⁴² More recent studies of the

general youth population have examined the effects of cyberbullying, such as that which occurs online or via text message, generally finding that cyberbullying is associated with similar negative outcomes as in-person bullying.⁴³ This study examined the relationships between online and text message-based bullying and harassment among LGBT youth specifically, with outcomes such as academic performance, self-esteem, and depression.⁴⁴

LGBT youth who had experienced more frequent⁴⁵ bullying online reported significantly lower GPAs (grade point averages) than youth who reported less frequent bullying online.⁴⁶ Bullying via text message, however, was not associated with a significant difference in GPA. As shown in Figure 9, LGBT youth who experienced both in-person and online/text forms of bullying exhibited the lowest GPAs.⁴⁷

Online bullying was also associated with poorer psychological well-being. LGBT youth who reported more frequent bullying online had substantially lower self-esteem⁴⁸ and higher levels of depression⁴⁹ than youth who had experienced less frequent bullying online.⁵⁰ Bullying via text message was again not associated with a significant difference in self-esteem or depression after accounting for other forms of bullying.⁵¹ As shown in Figures 10 and 11, LGBT youth who experienced both in-person and online/text forms of bullying exhibited the lowest levels of self-esteem and highest levels of depression.⁵²

Although LGBT youth were most commonly bullied in person at school, many continued to experience bullying online or via text message outside of the school environment. Moreover, online bullying was associated with lower academic success and lower well-being, as has been found for in-person bullying. Thus, parents, school personnel, and other persons working with youth should be more aware of the potential risks of online spaces, including bullying and harassment, as they continue their efforts to eradicate peer victimization from the school environment. These findings demonstrate that experiencing bullying in multiple contexts/locations may compound the negative effects of bullying, and thus be associated with poorer academic indicators and lower well-being.

Figure 9. Effects of In-Person and Online Bullying on GPA among LGBT Youth

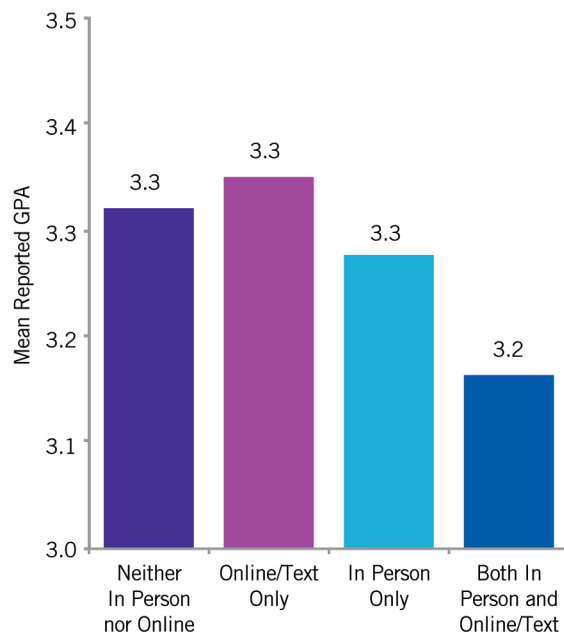


Figure 10. Effects of In-Person and Online Bullying on Self-Esteem among LGBT Youth

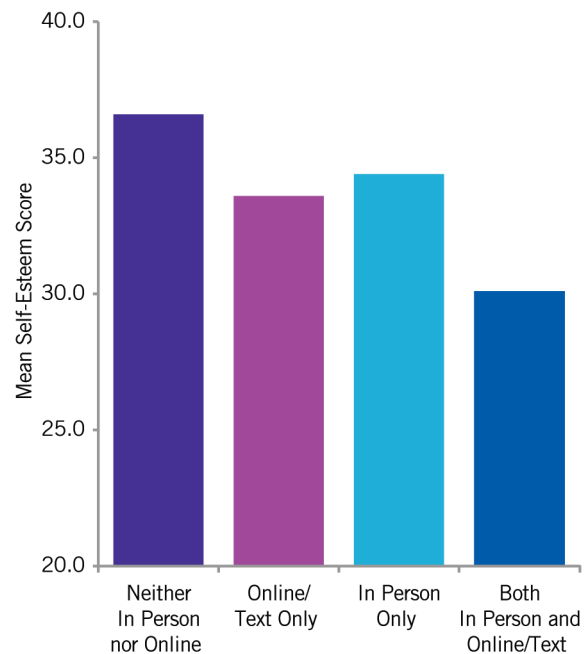
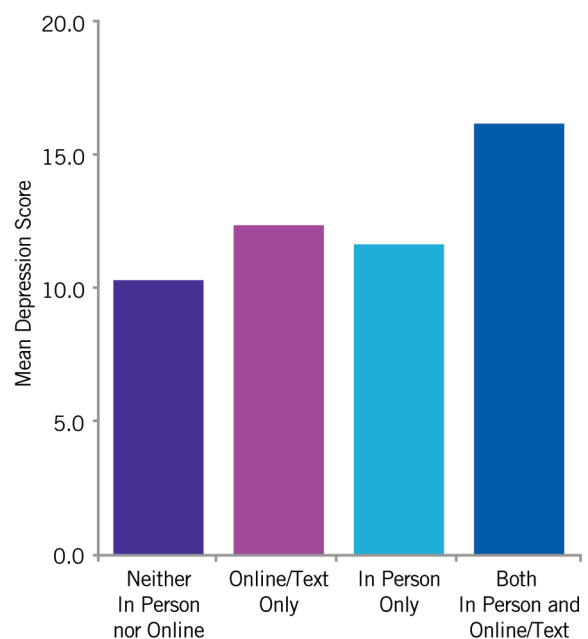


Figure 11. Effects of In-Person and Online Bullying on Depression among LGBT Youth



LGBT Resources and Information-Seeking Online

Although it is important to understand the risks that LGBT face online, it is equally important to understand the abundant opportunities for new and LGBT-affirming resources available through the Internet. As seen in research on in-school resources⁵³, having information about LGBT people, history, and events and the inclusion of LGBT-related topics in education can enhance an LGBT student's experiences in school. Yet, GLSEN's research in this area has shown that it is a minority of LGBT youth who have access to LGBT-relevant information at school and encounter LGBT-inclusive class curricula.⁵⁴ Thus, the increased access to resources and supports online may be especially beneficial to this population of youth.

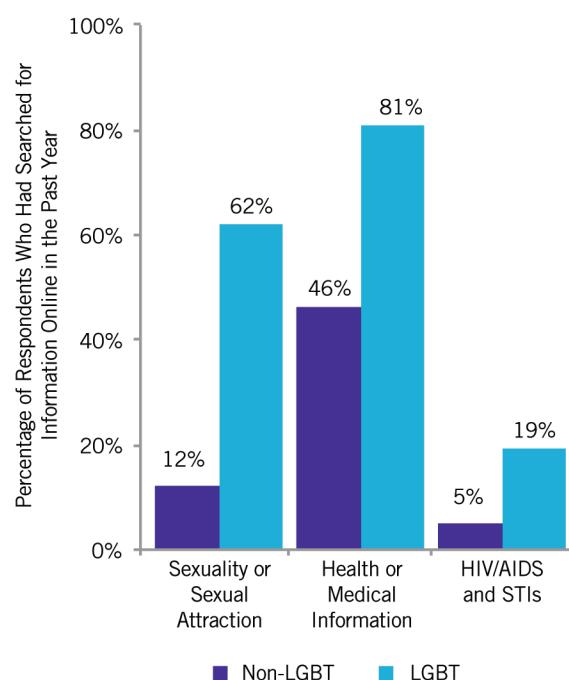
Available research suggests that the LGBT population, including youth, have been early adopters of the Internet and social media technologies, as well as more frequent users of such tools.⁵⁵ For LGBT people, the Internet has offered new avenues for a variety of activities related to being LGBT, from learning more about one's own gender or sexuality, to finding LGBT peers and romantic partners.⁵⁶ LGBT youth in this survey were asked about the purposes for which they go online, including whether or not they have used the Internet as a resource to explore their sexuality or sexual attraction. Youth were also asked about how out they are in various places and the person to whom they first disclosed their LGBT identity, including whether that individual was someone they knew only online or someone they knew in person.

Use of the Internet to Access Information on Sexuality, Sexual Attraction, and Health

Online spaces allow for increased access to resources, persons, or communities that may not be available in person.⁵⁷ Given the difficulty faced by LGBT youth in accessing LGBT-inclusive information in person, one might expect online resources to be particularly appealing for LGBT youth compared to non-LGBT youth. Thus, youth in this study were asked whether they had used the Internet in the past year to search for information on sexuality or sexual attraction; health and medical information; and information on HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

Evidence from this study suggests that the Internet does indeed serve as an important source of information for LGBT youth. As shown in Figure 12, LGBT youth were five times as likely to have searched online for information on sexuality and sexual attraction compared to non-LGBT youth (62% vs. 12%). In addition, LGBT youth were more likely than non-LGBT youth to have searched for health and medical information online (81% vs. 46%) and information on HIV/AIDS and STIs (19% vs. 5%).⁵⁸

Figure 12. Rates of Searching for Health Information Online among LGBT and Non-LGBT Youth



Peer Supports

As youth progress through adolescence they spend more time away from home, and peer networks increasingly provide meaningful emotional support and aid in the process of identity formation.⁵⁹ For LGBT youth who may be hesitant to be forthcoming with their families about their LGBT identities, friends may serve an even more important source of support during this time.⁶⁰ Unfortunately, some LGBT youth report losing friends during the coming out process, and many others fear such an outcome.⁶¹ The Internet may thus offer LGBT youth new opportunities for identity exploration and social support, with decreased risk of lost friends or victimization that might occur in offline spaces.

Broader research on how youth utilize online spaces suggests that most youth tend to use them to reinforce existing networks⁶², although some youth and young adults also use them to make new connections.⁶³ The opportunity to connect with new friends may be particularly important for LGBT youth. LGBT youth tend to be more satisfied with their social support from other LGBT people, because other LGBT people may more fully understand their sexuality and gender identities and expression.⁶⁴ The LGBT youth in this study were asked how many close offline and online friends they had and whether these friends were good at providing support.

Friends Online

Overall, LGBT youth in this study were more likely to have close friends that they had met in person than close friends they had met online: 96% of LGBT youth said they had at least one close in-person friend, compared to 50% of LGBT youth who said they had at least one close online friend (see Figure 13).⁶⁵ Nonetheless, the fact that half of LGBT youth said they knew at least one close online friend suggests that online spaces can be a source of meaningful support. In fact, LGBT youth were much more likely to have close online friends than non-LGBT youth: 50% of LGBT respondents reported having at least one close online friend, compared to only 19% of non-LGBT respondents; 14% of LGBT respondents reported having 4 or more close online friends, compared to only 5% of non-LGBT youth.⁶⁶ Of note, online relationships can complement offline social networks by expanding peer networks to include friends one first meets online, which then become integrated into existing in-person support

networks.⁶⁷ Such patterns may be important because they indicate that online relationships can extend in-person networks and thus, potentially contribute to more stable or proximal support. Of the LGBT youth in this study who had close online friends, 60% said they had subsequently met at least one such friend in person.

Figure 13. Number of Close Online Friends among LGBT Youth

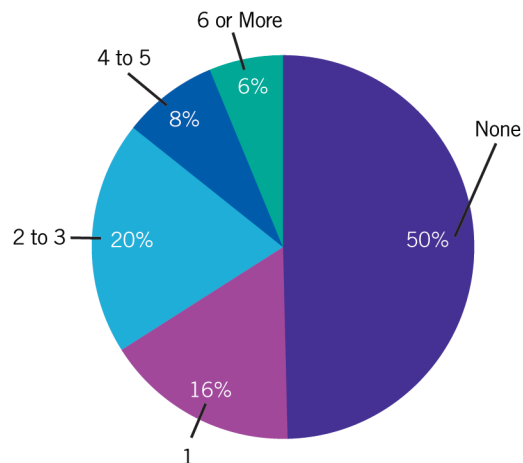
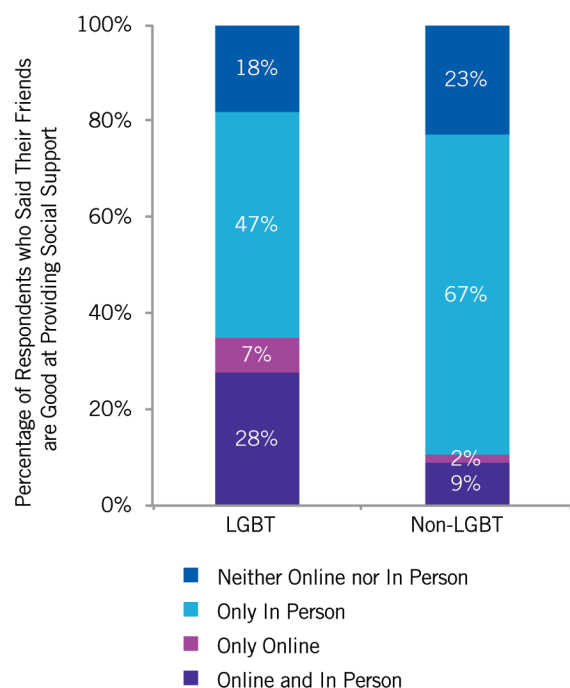


Figure 14. Availability of Strong Social Support among LGBT and Non-LGBT Youth



In order to understand if relationships between online and offline friends may be qualitatively different, respondents who had online friends rated the quality of support they received from their friends both online and offline (e.g., the extent to which they could talk about problems with friends online and in person; see Figure 14). Although all youth reported having strong social support from in-person peer relationships, LGBT youth were likelier to report strong relationships online as well, compared to non-LGBT youth: 35% of LGBT youth said their online friends provided strong support, whereas only 10% of non-LGBT youth answered similarly (see also Figure 14).⁶⁸ This finding is in accord with other findings throughout this study that suggest a greater reliance on the Internet for social support among LGBT youth than among non-LGBT youth.

Connecting with LGBT People Online

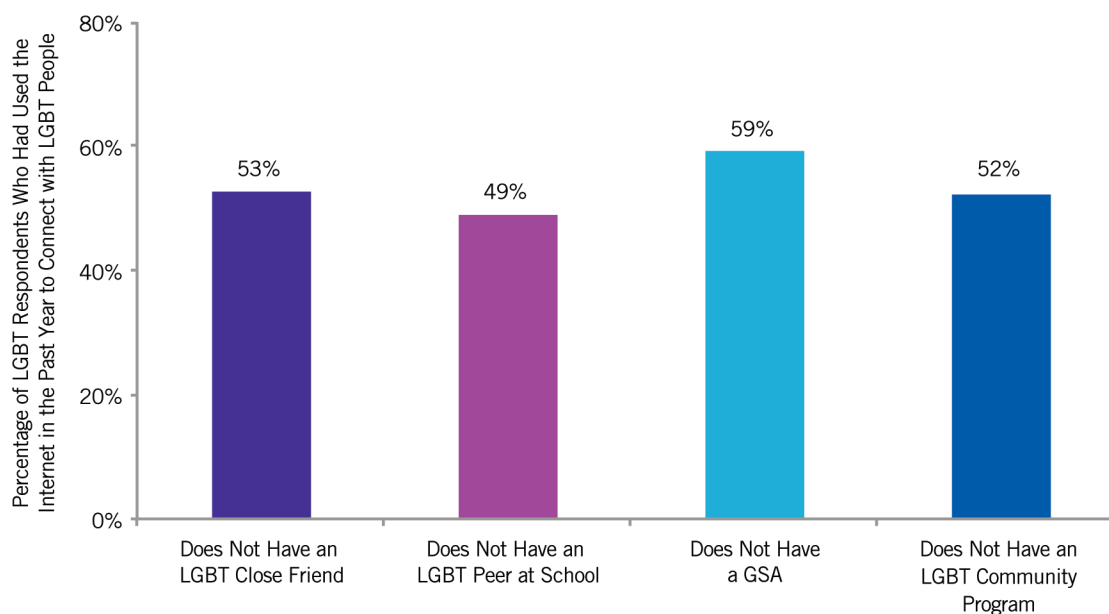
For LGBT youth, having friends who are also LGBT may be particularly important because they may understand their experiences better than non-LGBT peers.⁶⁹ Accordingly, LGBT youth in this study were asked whether they had used the Internet to connect with other LGBT people. Overall, 62% of LGBT youth had used the Internet to talk or connect with other LGBT people. Connecting with other LGBT people online was common among youth who did not report having offline venues to connect with other LGBT

people, such as a local LGBT youth group or a GSA (Gay-Straight Alliance) at their school. As shown in Figure 15, for instance, more than half of youth (59%) who lacked a GSA had used the Internet to connect with other LGBT people. Similarly, around half of youth who lacked an LGBT close friend (53%) or peer at school (49%), regardless of whether they had a GSA or LGBT community group, had used the Internet to connect with other LGBT people. Without the Internet, their connection to LGBT people and potential sources of support might have been substantially diminished.

Outness and Social Support

In addition to the availability of LGBT-related resources in person, the use of online spaces for social support may also be shaped by one's comfort or ability to identify as LGBT: youth who are not out may feel less able to acquire the support they need, perhaps particularly around LGBT issues. One reason LGBT youth may spend substantial time on the Internet is because online spaces offer them expanded opportunities for exploring and being open about their gender identity or sexual orientation. Youth who are out tend to report better psychological health, perhaps because they are able to express themselves more fully.⁷⁰ However, because being out may make one a more explicit target for bias-based bullying and harassment, it may also be related to

Figure 15. Rates of Internet Use to Connect with Other LGBT People among LGBT Youth who Lack Access to In-Person LGBT Resources

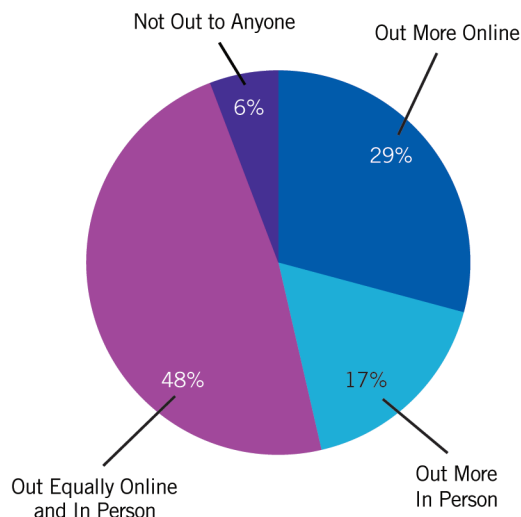


higher rates of victimization.⁷¹ In addition, being out has sometimes been associated with a feared or actual loss of support from friends or family members.⁷² Thus, LGBT youth may be intentional in where they are out.⁷³

LGBT respondents were asked whether they were out and if so, the person to whom they first disclosed their LGBT identity. Consistent with prior research⁷⁴, a large majority of LGBT youth had first told a friend about their sexual orientation or gender identity, with most of these friends being known offline (64%). Nonetheless, a small but notable minority of LGBT youth (12%) said they had first told a friend they knew only online, and 2% said they had first told an adult online. In addition, as shown in Figure 16, 29% of LGBT youth said they were more out online than in person. Only 6% of youth said they were not out to anyone online or in person. Thus, online spaces provide an opportunity for youth to be out about being LGBT.

Furthermore, for LGBT youth who were not out to peers in person, online spaces may actually aid in creating a network of friends with whom they can be open about their LGBT identity or identities. Half (52%) of youth who were not out to anyone offline reported that they connected with other LGBT people online. Thus, online spaces may be crucial for LGBT youth who are not safe or comfortable being out about their identity at home, school, or with friends, allowing them to access LGBT-related support without the potential risks associated with being out in person.

Figure 16. Outness Online and In Person
“Where are you out more?”



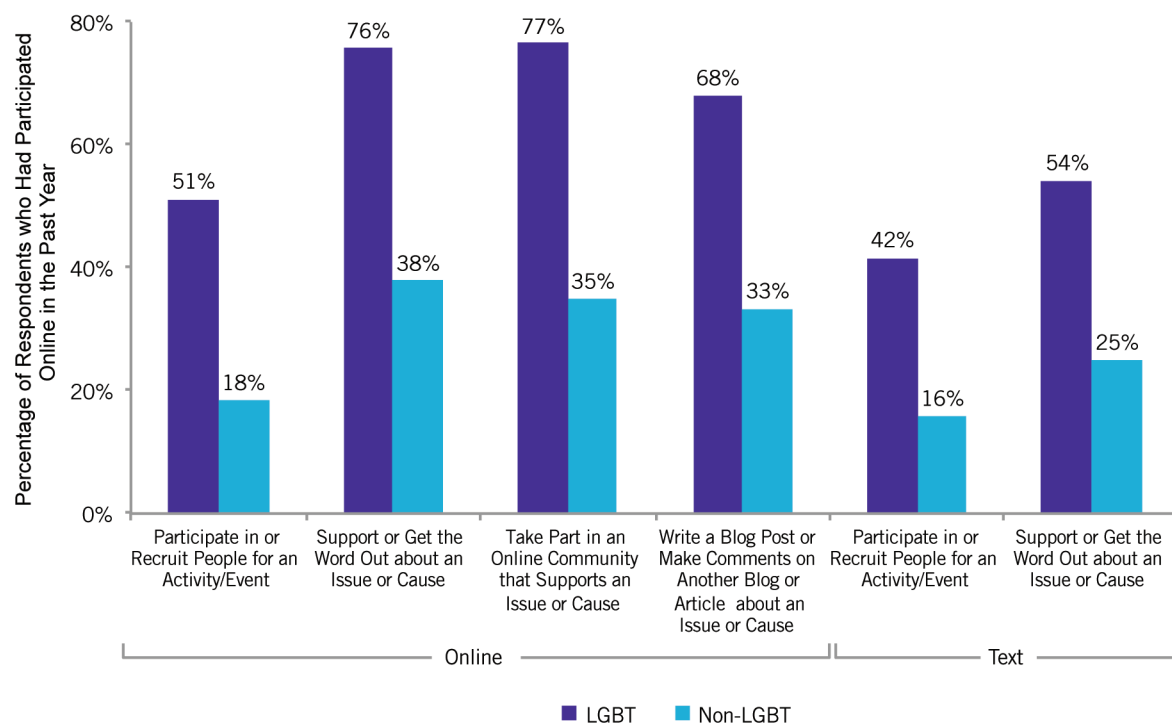
Civic Participation

Participation in school activities and clubs as well as civic engagement in the wider community are widely known to promote positive development among youth.⁷⁵ Youth who are more engaged civically report better school and life outcomes, including higher academic achievement, better psychological adjustment, lower drug and alcohol use, and greater civic participation throughout life.⁷⁶ The expansion of the Internet and other communication technologies offers the potential to fundamentally alter civic participation and engagement in the United States — allowing for easier access to a wide variety of activities, from getting news online or visiting a political website, to organizing an in-person event. In fact, these new technologies may provide access to a greater number of venues and new tools for civic participation, and may also allow for greater participation from individuals who have been previously excluded from the political process.⁷⁷ For these reasons, we asked youth in this study about their frequency of various forms of online and text-based political participation.

Rates of Online and Text Message Political Participation

LGBT youth in this study demonstrated high rates of online political participation. Overall, 88% of LGBT youth reported having used the Internet for civic purposes. LGBT youth most commonly reported having taken part in an online community that supports a cause or issue (77%) or gotten the word out about a cause or issue (76%).⁷⁸ Seven in ten (68%) reported having written a blog or posted comments about a cause or issue during the past year, and half (51%) reported having used the Internet to participate in or recruit people for a political activity (e.g., a demonstration or protest). In addition, as also shown in Figure 17, more than half (54%) of LGBT youth had used text messages in the past year to support or get the word out about an issue or cause, and just under half (42%) had participated in or encouraged others to participate in an in-person activity or event.⁷⁹ In general, LGBT youth were about twice as active online as non-LGBT youth for each of the civic activities examined here, even after accounting for the total amount of time spent online.⁸⁰ For instance, as shown in Figure 17, 76% of LGBT youth had used the Internet in the past year to support or get the word out about an issue or cause, compared to only 38% of non-LGBT

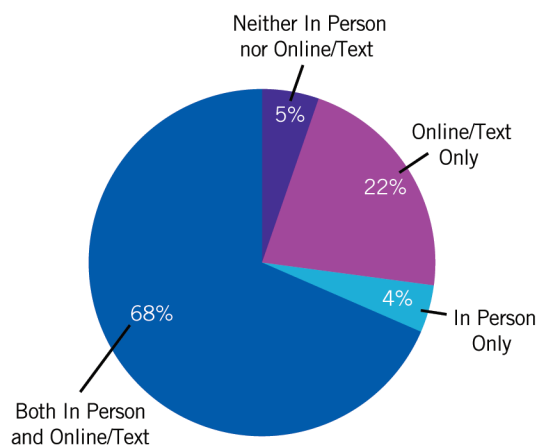
Figure 17. Rates of Online and Text-Based Civic Participation among LGBT and Non-LGBT Youth



youth. Together, rates for both online and text message forms of participation suggest that these new technologies may allow traditionally excluded groups — such as LGBT youth — a larger presence in the political process.

Online spaces may have the benefit of enhancing opportunities for civic participation. As shown in Figure 18, most LGBT youth in this study (68%) said they participated both online and in person, reflecting prior research that online/text participation and traditional civic participation might support one another.⁸¹ However, for LGBT youth, online spaces may also expand opportunities not available in person, as many LGBT youth may not feel comfortable participating in school or community contexts. Indeed, 22% of LGBT youth said they were only engaged civically online or via text message. Thus, online spaces may facilitate crucial opportunities for early engagement and serve as a possible pathway to in-person engagement throughout life.

Figure 18. Mode of Online and In-Person Civic Participation among LGBT Youth



Differences by Individual and Contextual Factors

Findings from this report indicate widespread use of online spaces and resources among LGBT youth. However, it is important to remember that LGBT youth are not a monolithic group and that Internet use may vary in this population by demographic characteristics. As such, we examined differences in online experiences and resource use based on personal and contextual characteristics, including race/ethnicity, gender, and locale. Although other factors, including family and school characteristics, are likely associated with differences in online activity as well, race/ethnicity, gender, and locale are some of the more commonly discussed factors that influence the experiences of LGBT youth. Specifically, we examined demographic and locale differences on: 1) Internet use, 2) online and text-based bullying and harassment, 3) online information seeking, 4) outness and connecting with LGBT peers online, and 5) online civic participation.

Race/Ethnicity

Research suggests that although gaps in Internet access have narrowed in recent years, White youth continue to show slightly higher rates of access than African American and Latino youth; it is important to discern whether these trends apply to the LGBT

youth population, given that LGBT youth may already face other hurdles to accessing resources. For LGBT youth specifically, African American and Asian American youth have often experienced the lowest levels of victimization⁸², perhaps because they may also be less likely to be out than White students.⁸³ Thus, we examined whether the experiences of LGBT youth online differed with respect to race/ethnicity.

INTERNET USE

African American and Asian American LGBT youth spent more time online than White and Latino/a youth, even after controlling for differences in family income among racial/ethnic groups (see Figure 19). LGBT youth who reported “other” races/ethnicities also spent more time online than White and Latino/a youth, but less time online than African American and Asian American youth.⁸⁴

ONLINE VICTIMIZATION

GLSEN’s National School Climate Survey consistently finds that African American LGBT youth experience lower levels of victimization at school than White LGBT youth.⁸⁵ Consistent with this finding, African American LGBT youth in this study also demonstrated lower levels of online victimization than White LGBT youth (see Figure 20); White LGBT youth also experienced higher levels of online and text-based victimization than Latino/a youth.⁸⁶ Asian American youth were not different from White, African American, or Latino/a youth in levels of online or text-based victimization.⁸⁷

Figure 19. Time Spent Online with Various Electronic Devices among LGBT Youth by Race/Ethnicity

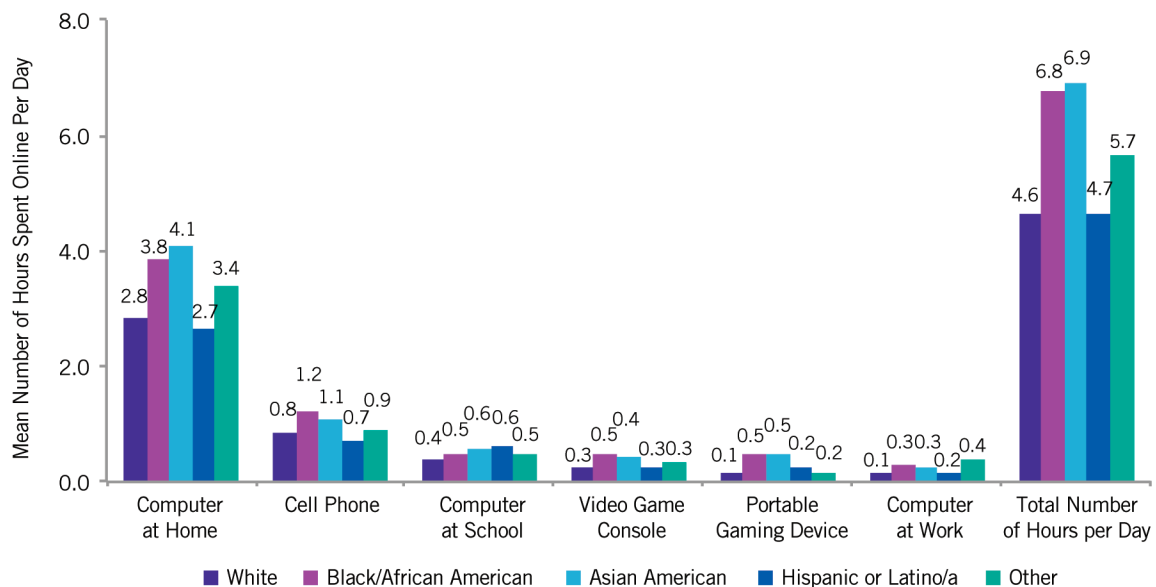


Figure 20. Online and Text-Based Victimization among LGBT Youth by Race/Ethnicity

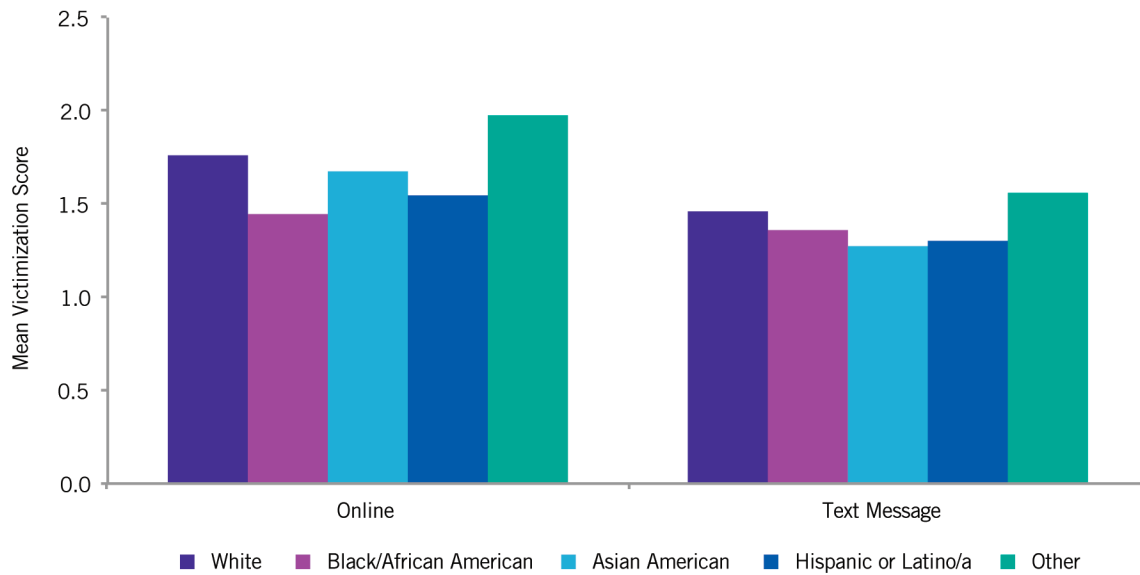
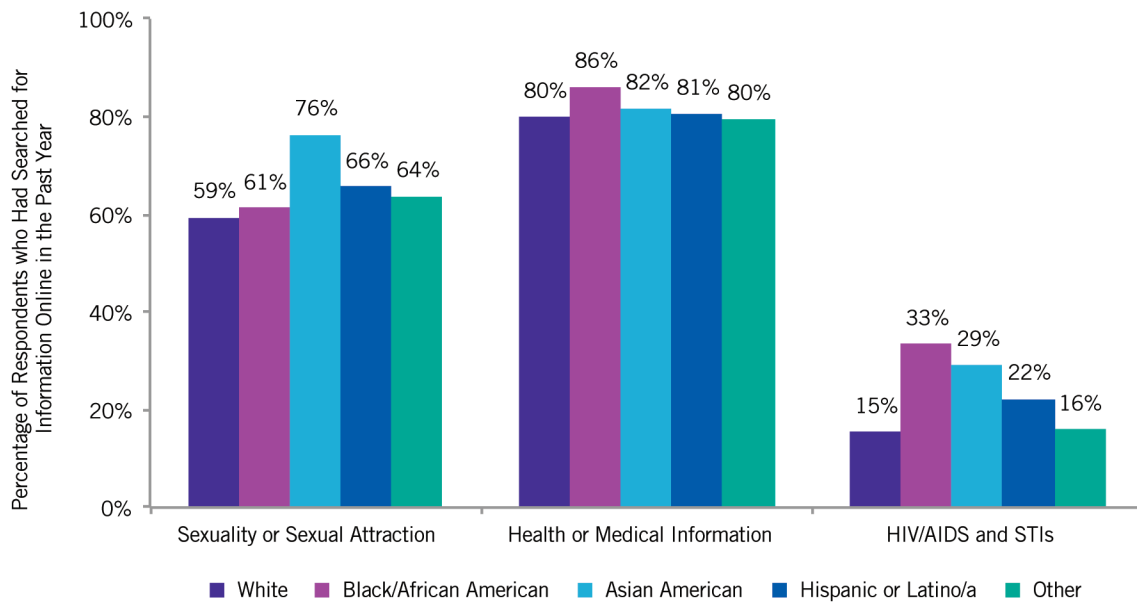


Figure 21. Rates of Searching for Health Information Online among LGBT Youth by Race/Ethnicity



ONLINE INFORMATION SEEKING

LGBT respondents across racial/ethnic groups demonstrated high rates of searching for health or medical information online, with at least 80% of respondents from all racial/ethnic groups reporting that they had searched for health or medical information online in the past year, and between 59% and 76% saying they had searched for information on sexuality or sexual attraction (see Figure 21). However, differences emerged with respect to information seeking regarding HIV/AIDS and other STIs: African American LGBT youth were more likely than White, Latino/a, and “other” race/ethnicity youth to say they had searched for this type of information online in the past year.⁸⁸ White LGBT youth were also less likely than Latino/a LGBT youth to say they had searched for information on STIs online. Given that rates of STIs are often found to be higher among African American youth than White youth, this finding suggests continued need for sexual education and prevention efforts.⁸⁹

OUTNESS AND CONNECTING WITH LGBT PEERS ONLINE

Respondents in this study showed slightly different patterns of outness by race/ethnicity. African American and Asian American LGBT youth were

less likely to be out overall than White youth (see Figure 22), as has been found in previous research.⁹⁰ However, outness within a specific mode (i.e., online or offline) did not differ substantially by race/ethnicity. In addition, given that some LGBT youth may be more comfortable identifying as LGBT online than in person, as well as differences in the LGBT identity development process by race/ethnicity, one might expect LGBT youth to speak with other LGBT people online at different rates with regard to race/ethnicity. However, as shown in Figure 23, there were no discernible differences in speaking with other LGBT people online by race/ethnicity: approximately 80% of LGBT youth across race/ethnic identity had done so in the past year.⁹¹

ONLINE CIVIC PARTICIPATION

Some previous research suggests that White and Asian American youth are more likely to participate in school and civic activities than African American and Latino youth.⁹² As shown in Figure 24, however, these differences were not observed for online civic participation among LGBT youth in this study. A substantial portion of LGBT youth across race/ethnicity had participated online, with no statistically significant differences among them.⁹³

Figure 22. Outness by Race/Ethnicity

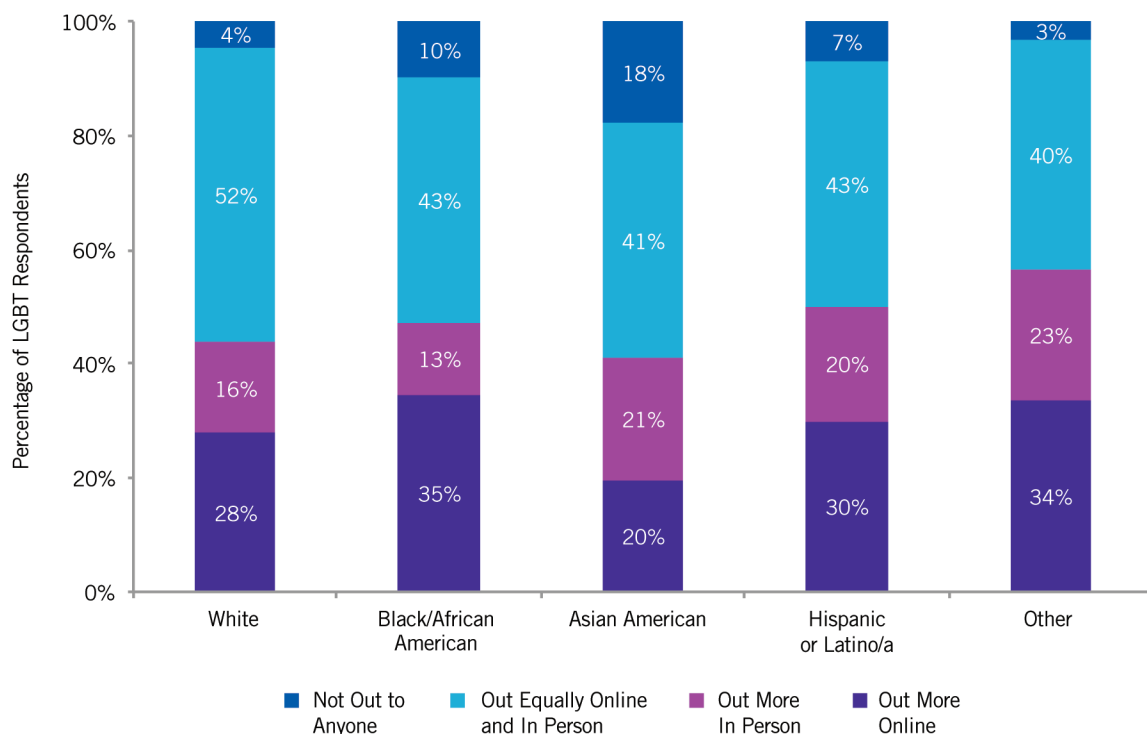


Figure 23. Frequency of Using the Internet to Connect with Other LGBT People by Race/Ethnicity

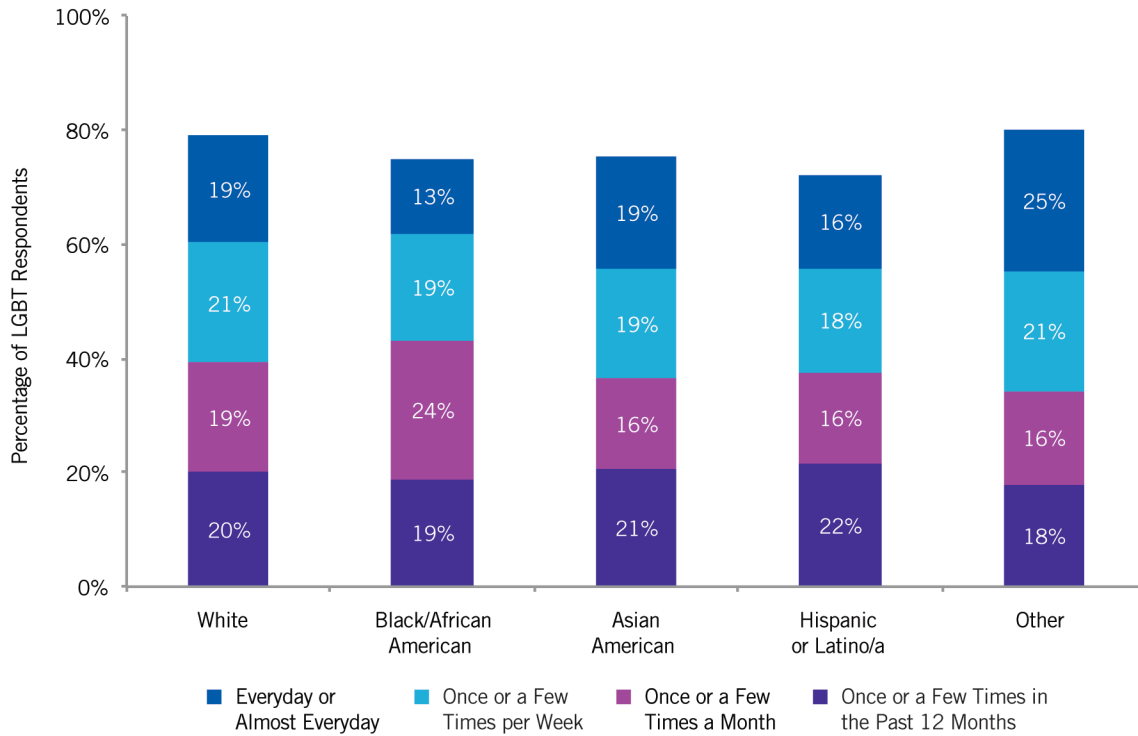


Figure 24. Rates of Online Civic Participation among LGBT Youth by Race/Ethnicity

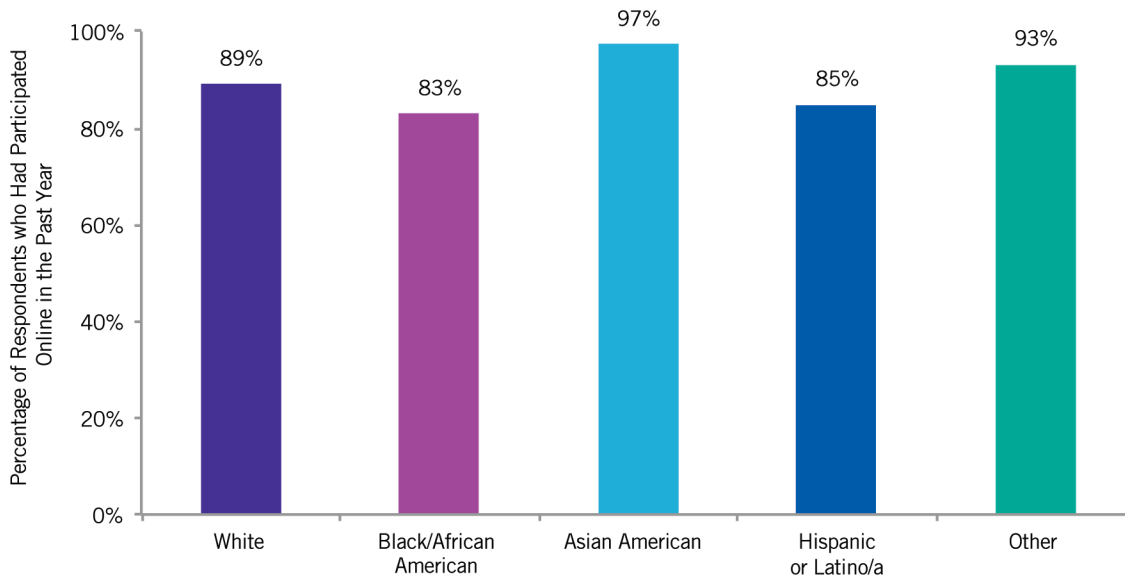
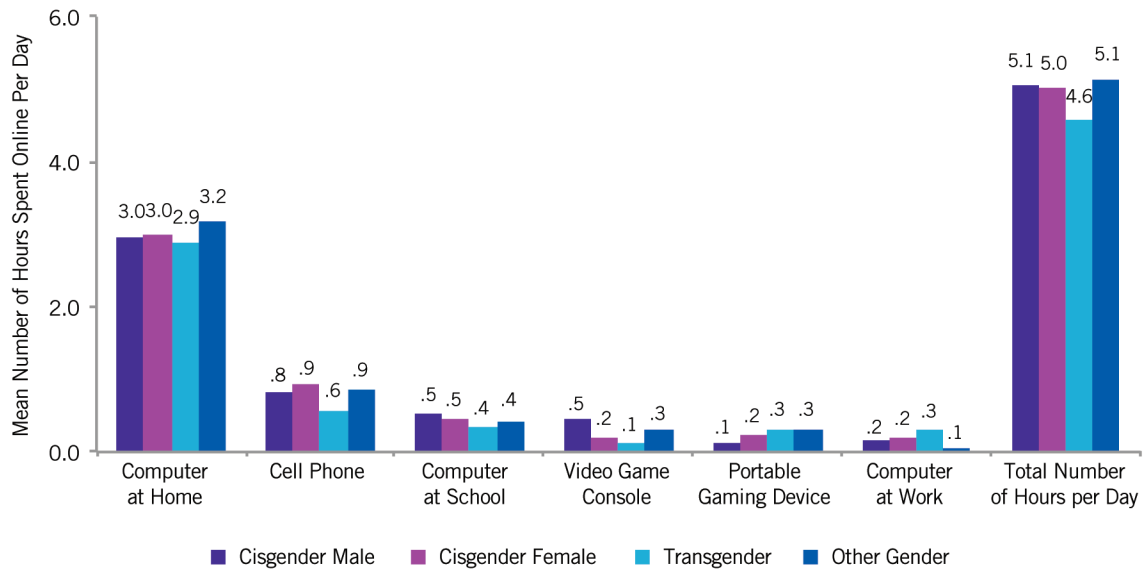


Figure 25. Time Spent Online with Various Electronic Devices among LGBT Youth by Gender



Gender Identity

Research suggests that the experiences of LGBT youth in schools and other environments differ substantially by gender.⁹⁴ Students who identify as transgender or another gender consistently report greater levels of victimization at school than their cisgender⁹⁵ LGB peers.⁹⁶ Educators may be particularly unlikely to address negative remarks about gender, compared to other forms of biased language.⁹⁷ In addition, whereas LGBT youth across gender identities report that they lack access to LGBT-relevant information in their school curricula⁹⁸, transgender people may have a particular lack of access to health resources.⁹⁹ As such, it is also possible that the experiences of LGBT youth online differ with respect to gender.

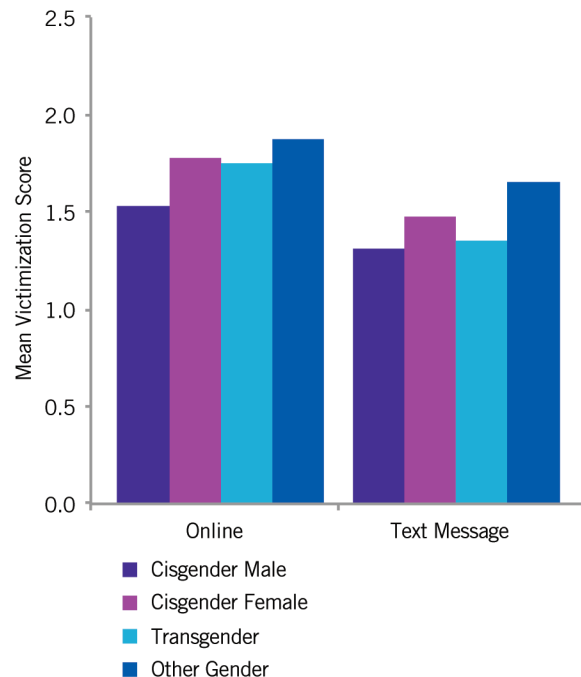
INTERNET USE

Our results indicate no significant differences by gender in the amount of time spent online across the different devices (see Figure 25).¹⁰⁰ Overall, across gender groups, LGBT youth reported spending approximately 5 hours online per day.

ONLINE VICTIMIZATION

Findings from this study show that cisgender LGB females, transgender youth, and youth with “other” genders reported higher levels of online victimization than cisgender male GB youth (see Figure 26).¹⁰¹ In addition, cisgender LGB females and youth with “other” genders reported higher levels of text-based victimization than cisgender GB males.

Figure 26. Online and Text-Based Victimization among LGBT Youth by Gender



ONLINE INFORMATION SEEKING

Rates of health and medical online information seeking among LGBT youth were high across gender identities in this study. Nonetheless, transgender youth were considerably more likely to have searched for such information in the past year compared to other LGBT youth (95% of transgender youth versus between 77% and 80% of cisgender LGB and “other” gender youth, respectively), as shown in Figure 27.¹⁰² In addition, cisgender female youth reported lower rates of searching for information on sexuality or sexual attraction online compared to other LGBT youth. Rates of information seeking on STIs revealed different patterns than those observed for other kinds of information: cisgender male GB youth were more likely than cisgender female LGB and “other” gender youth to have searched for information on STIs; transgender youth were also more likely than cisgender female LGB youth to have searched for such information.¹⁰³ These findings may be a reflection of different information needs across groups within the LGBT youth population. For example, transgender youth may be much more likely to search for health or medical information as it relates to specific transgender healthcare needs. Perhaps due to the higher incidence of HIV among the gay and bisexual male population, gay and bisexual young males may have greater need for information about safer sex practices.¹⁰⁴

OUTNESS AND CONNECTING WITH LGBT PEERS ONLINE

Cisgender GB males and transgender youth were more likely than cisgender female LGB youth to say they were more out online than in person, as shown in Figure 28.¹⁰⁵ In addition, transgender youth exhibited the highest frequencies of speaking with other LGBT people online, followed by cisgender GB males, followed by youth with “other” gender identities (see Figure 29).¹⁰⁶ Cisgender LGB females demonstrated the lowest rates and likelihoods of speaking with other LGBT people online.

ONLINE CIVIC PARTICIPATION

Research on youth in general suggests that female adolescents may participate at higher rates in civic and extracurricular activities than male adolescents.¹⁰⁷ Among LGBT youth in this study, there were no significant differences across gender groups in rates of participation online (as shown in Figure 30). Approximately 90% of all LGBT youth reported that they had participated online or via text message at least once in the past year.¹⁰⁸

Figure 27. Rates of Searching for Health Information Online among LGBT Youth by Gender

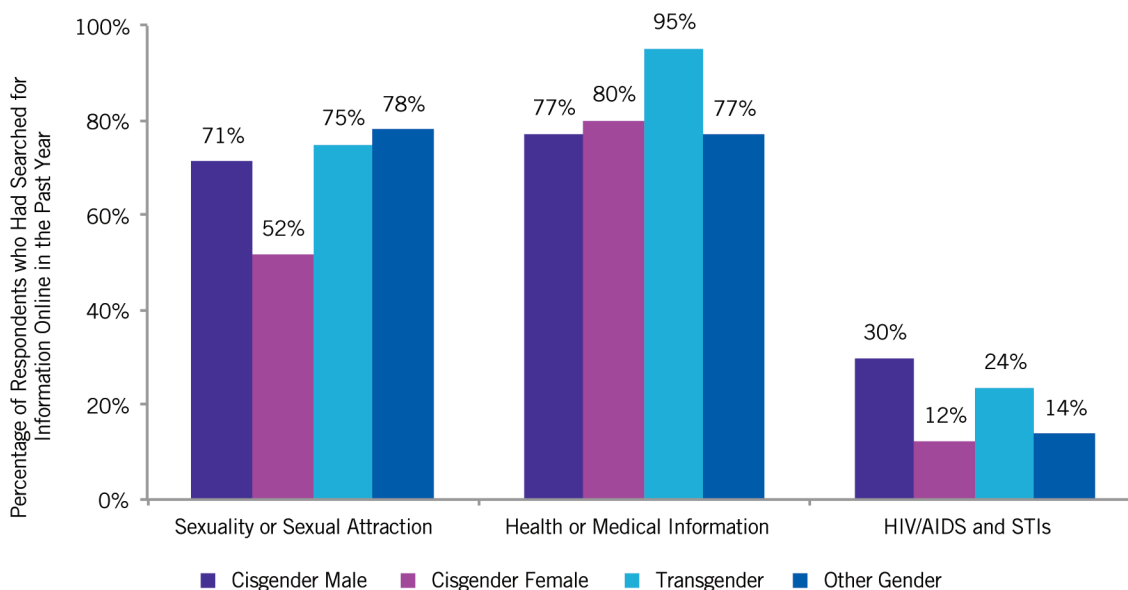


Figure 28. Outness by Gender

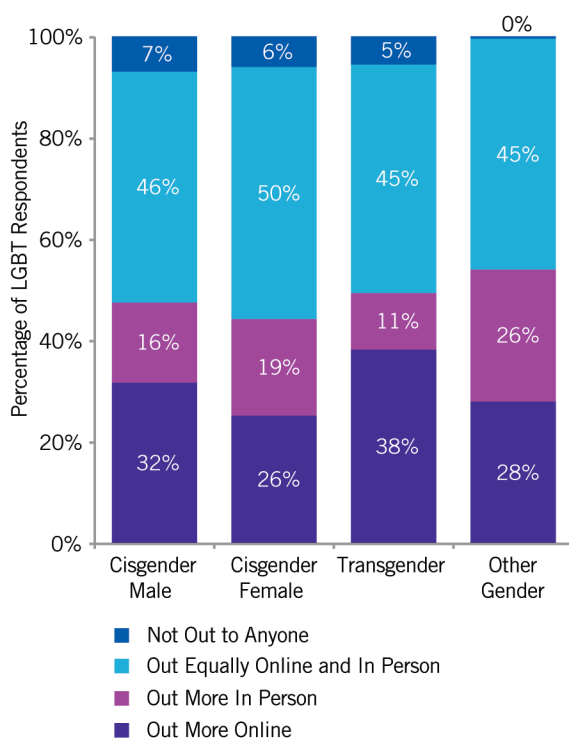


Figure 30. Rates of Online Civic Participation among LGBT Youth by Gender

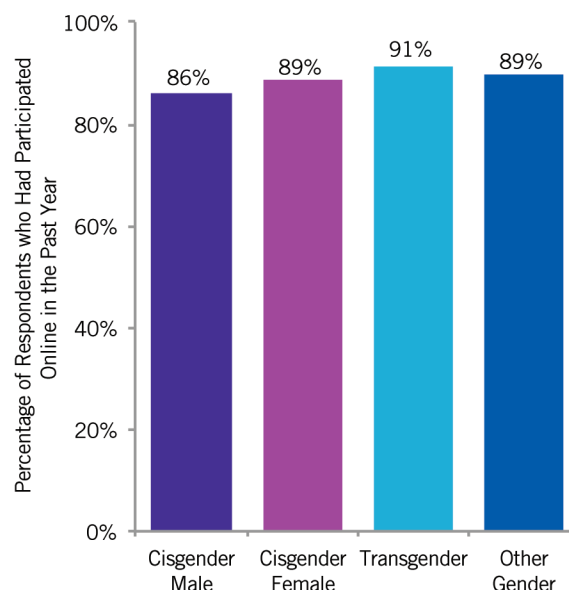
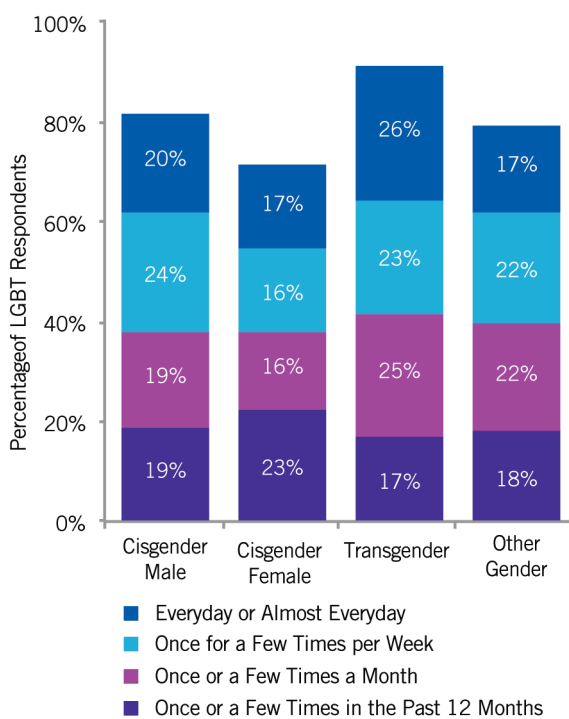


Figure 29. Frequency of Using the Internet to Connect with Other LGBT People by Gender



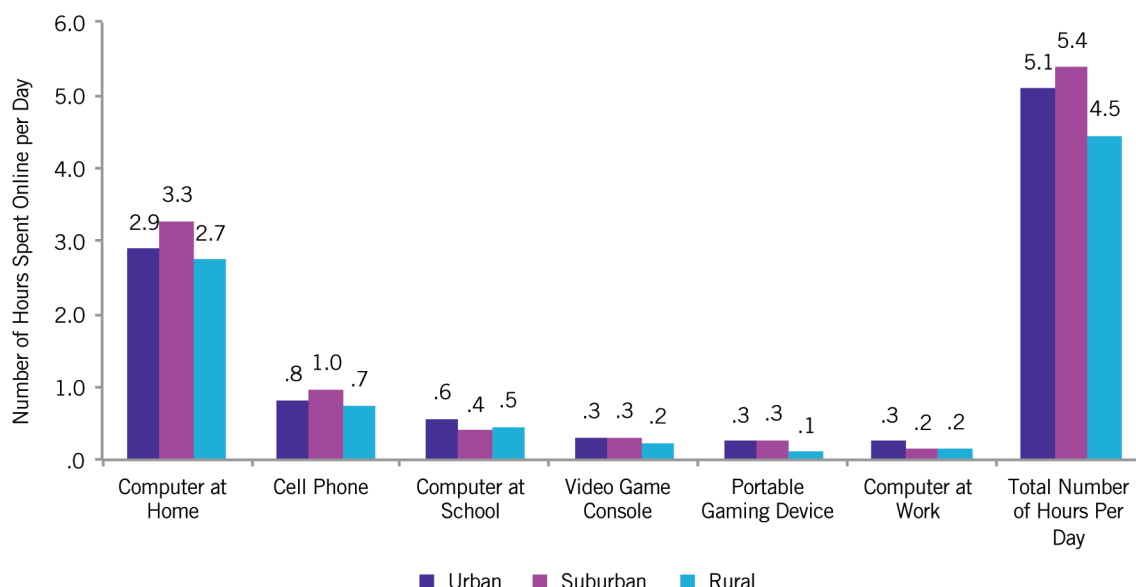
Locale

Research has consistently found that experiences of LGBT youth differ substantially with regard to locale.¹⁰⁹ Recent findings by GLSEN suggest that rural LGBT youth, on the whole, face more hostile learning environments than LGBT youth in other areas of the country.¹¹⁰ In addition, LGBT youth in rural areas may have access to fewer LGBT-supportive resources and may also face greater difficulty building a network of friends who understand them, whether these friends identify as LGBT or non-LGBT.¹¹¹ As such, the Internet may offer affirming spaces and resources particularly for LGBT people in some areas of the country.¹¹²

INTERNET USE

We observed significant differences in the amount of time LGBT youth spent online by locale (see Figure 31). Overall, rural LGBT youth spent nearly an hour less online per day than suburban youth, and approximately 30 minutes less per day than urban youth, even after accounting for differences in family income across these locales. In particular, rural LGBT youth reported spending less time online per day via a computer at home or portable gaming device than suburban youth. Compared to suburban youth, urban LGBT youth spent more time online via a computer at school.¹¹³

Figure 31. Time Spent Online with Various Electronic Devices among LGBT Youth by Locale



ONLINE VICTIMIZATION

Consistent with findings about school-based victimization¹¹⁴, LGBT youth in rural areas of the country experienced substantially higher rates of victimization online and via text message compared to LGBT youth in suburban and urban areas of the country, as shown in Figure 32.¹¹⁵

ONLINE INFORMATION SEEKING

LGBT youth across locales in this study reported searching for LGBT-relevant health information at similar rates, as shown in Figure 33.¹¹⁶ The only significant difference across locale was that suburban youth were more likely than rural youth to have reported seeking sexuality information online (66% of suburban youth vs. 57% of rural youth).

OUTNESS AND CONNECTING WITH LGBT PEERS ONLINE

Rural respondents were significantly more likely than urban and suburban respondents to say they were more out online (34%, vs. 27% of suburban and 27% of urban respondents; see Figure 34).¹¹⁷ LGBT youth across locales in this study connected with other LGBT people online at similar rates and frequencies, with approximately 80% of youth across locales saying they had done so at least once in the past year (see Figure 35).¹¹⁸

Figure 32. Online and Text-Based Victimization among LGBT Youth by Locale

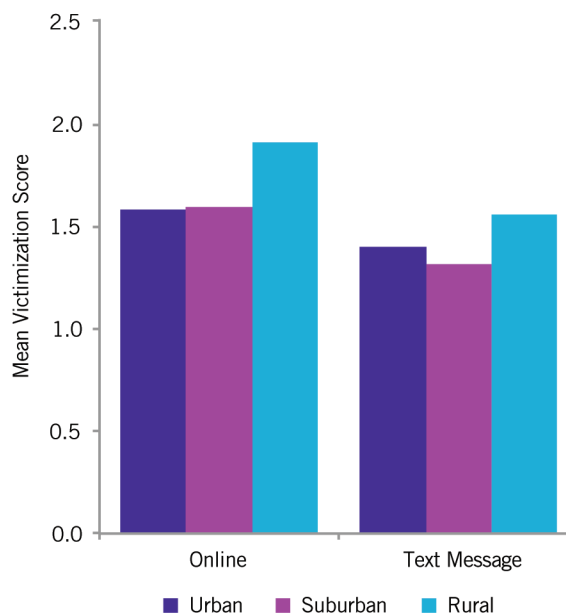


Figure 33. Rates of Searching for Health Information Online among LGBT Youth by Locale

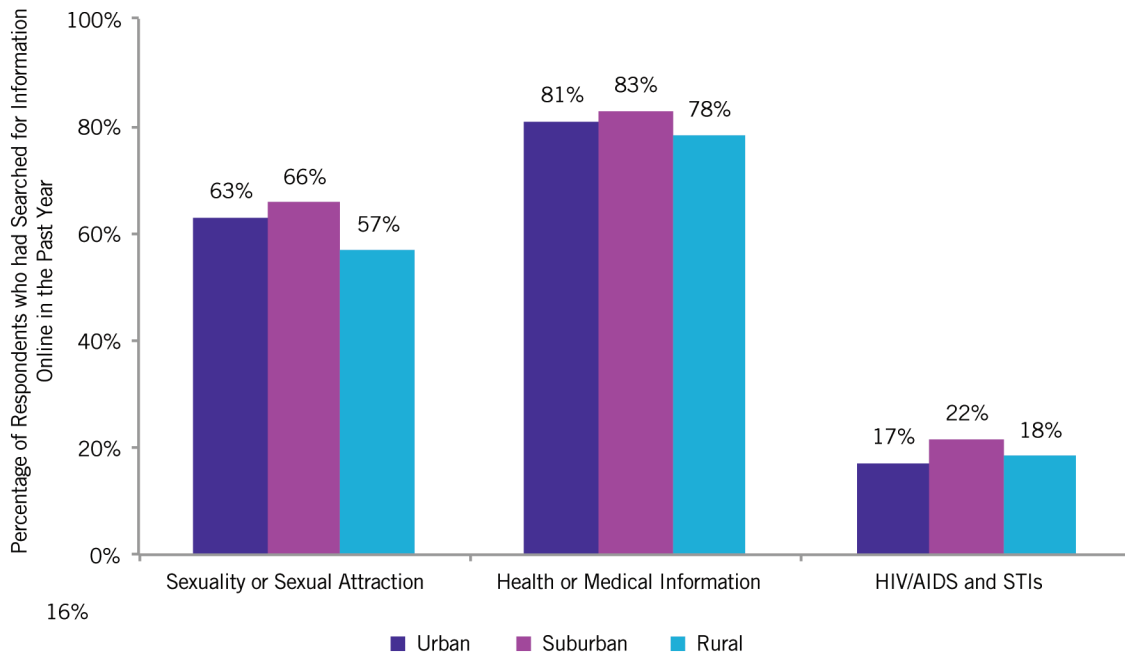


Figure 34. Outness by Locale

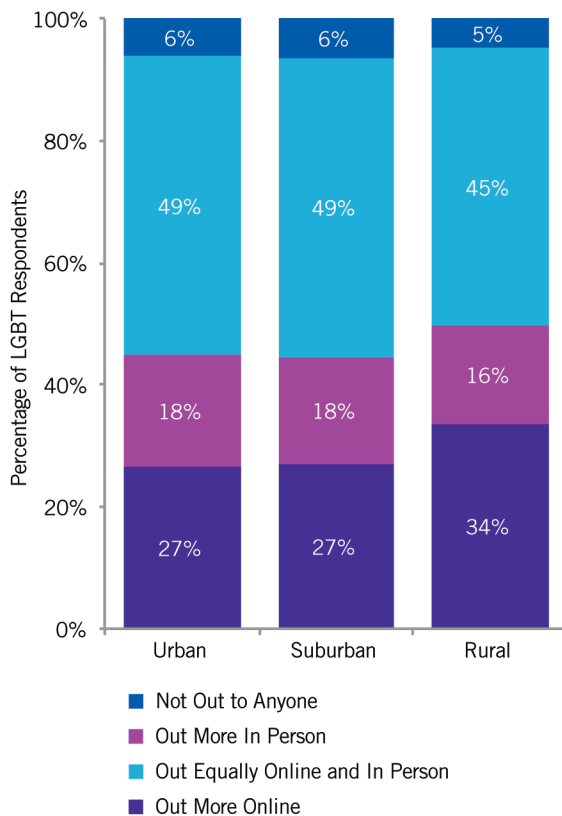
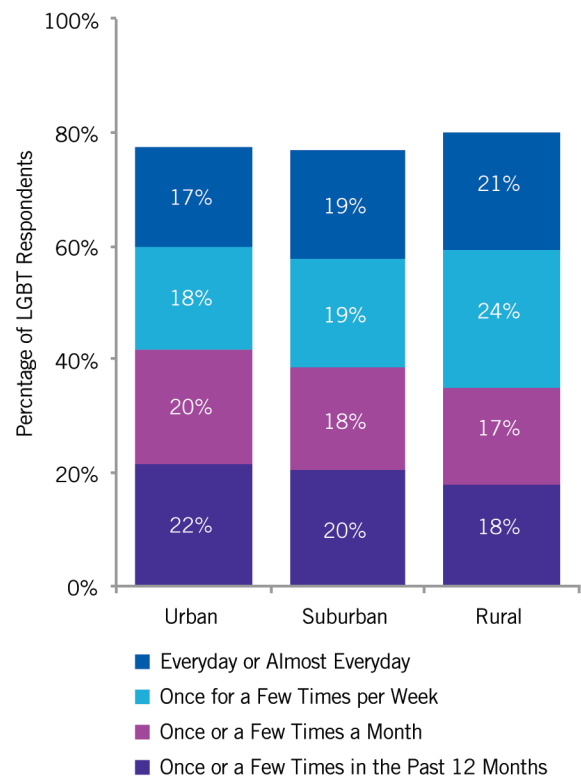


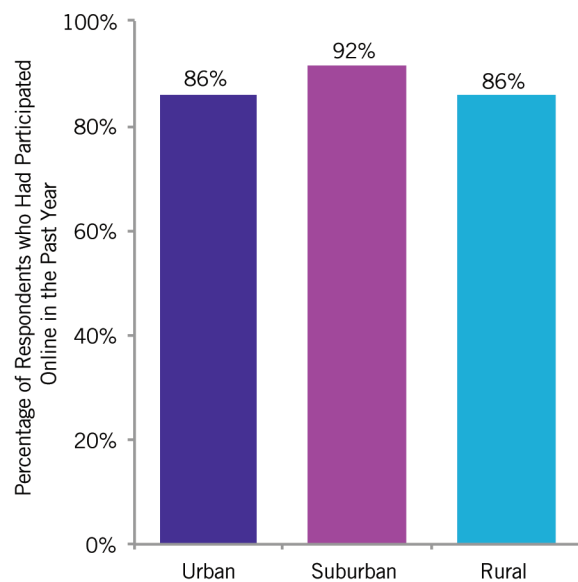
Figure 35. Frequency of Using the Internet to Connect with Other LGBT People by Locale



ONLINE CIVIC PARTICIPATION

Given that LGBT youth in some areas of the country experience more hostile school climates and may perceive less opportunity to participate in extracurricular and community activities, one might expect some youth to be more likely to seek out alternative opportunities for civic engagement. Although youth across locales participated in civic activities at high rates online, suburban LGBT youth were more likely than urban and rural youth to have done so in the past year (92% of suburban youth vs. 86% of urban and 86% of rural youth), as shown in Figure 36.¹¹⁹

Figure 36. Rates of Online Civic Participation among LGBT Youth by Locale



Conclusion and Recommendations

Limitations

The methods used for this survey resulted in a nationally representative sample of youth, including those who identify as LGBT. However, it is important to note that the general sample is representative only of youth who have some access to the Internet, and the LGBT subsample is representative only of LGBT youth who self-identify as LGBT. Another possible limitation to the survey is related to the sample's racial/ethnic composition — LGBT youth were weighted to general youth population parameters, but because there are no national statistics on the demographic breakdown of LGBT-identified youth, we cannot know how our sample compares to other population-based studies and whether LGBT youth of color were adequately represented in our sample.

In addition, the subsample of LGBT youth was weighted equally between the HPOL and GLSEN recruitment methods; it is impossible to know whether one group was more representative of LGBT youth than the other, and thus impossible to discern the appropriateness of the weighting design. It is also possible that neither method captured a sample of LGBT youth online representative of LGBT youth in general. For instance, LGBT youth online may have more resources than LGBT youth who do not have reliable Internet access. In addition, LGBT youth who spend more time online may have different interpersonal characteristics that could render them distinct from LGBT youth in general. It is also important to note that our survey reflects only the experiences of youth between 2010 and 2011.

Discussion

Findings in this report suggest that online spaces pose opportunities as well as challenges for LGBT youth. The evidence reported here gives nuance to frequent media depictions of the Internet as a singularly dangerous place, but also cautions against portrayals of the Internet as a universal antidote to commonly experienced problems. Whereas one might hope for the Internet to close the gaps in access to resources experienced by some LGBT youth, this report finds that the Internet most frequently complements resources that are available in person. Nonetheless, although rates of use are generally higher among youth who already have access to in-person resources, they are nonetheless also high among youth who lack access to in-person resources. Thus, although the Internet does not typically narrow gaps in access to LGBT-related resources, it nonetheless provides substantial benefits to more marginalized LGBT youth, and on the whole, LGBT youth appear to be better off having them.

LGBT youth experienced high rates of victimization online.

As was the case for in-person victimization, LGBT youth experienced a high degree of harassment online on the basis of their sexual orientation and/or gender expression. LGBT youth were also substantially more likely than non-LGBT youth to have been bullied.

LGBT youth commonly said they felt unsafe when they were online and overall, felt less safe than non-LGBT youth both online and offline. Youth were commonly bullied online when they were at home. Thus, the Internet and related technologies have expanded opportunities for bullying and harassment beyond the school context. In addition, some youth reported being bullied online or via text message while at school, indicating that efforts to prohibit cell phones from the school environment are less widespread or have been at least partially

unsuccessful, and/or that educators often fail to address technology-mediated bullying. Educators, parents, and other parties vested in youth safety should acknowledge of these new patterns of bullying.

Of note, LGBT youth who were bullied online or via text message experienced lower self-esteem and higher depression, even after accounting for the effects of in-person victimization. Thus, Internet-based bullying appears to contribute independently and negatively to well-being.

The Internet affords opportunities for LGBT youth to access information and support.

LGBT youth were significantly more likely than non-LGBT youth to have used the Internet to search for health and medical information, information on sexuality or sexual attraction, and information on STIs. Online spaces also offer new opportunities and venues for LGBT youth to come out and be out, as substantial numbers of LGBT youth said they had first come out to someone online or were more out online than offline.

LGBT youth were more likely than non-LGBT youth to say they had close online friends and to have met close friends in person whom they had first met online. Compared to non-LGBT youth, they were also much more likely to say that their online friends were able to provide strong support.

In general, LGBT youth appeared to use the Internet to reinforce their existing networks of resources and support. LGBT youth who had access to in-person LGBT-related resources (e.g., GSAs and community groups) used the Internet to connect with LGBT people more frequently than youth who lacked these in-person resources. Nonetheless, for the majority of youth who were lacking in-person resources and support, online spaces afforded access to resources that they would otherwise not have had at all. In addition, a notable number of youth had first come out to someone online, perhaps because they perceived it to be safer.

LGBT youth frequently used the Internet for civic engagement.

LGBT youth were highly engaged online and via text message, reporting twice the rates of civic participation online and via text message as non-LGBT youth. Most of the LGBT youth in our study had used the Internet to support a cause or issue, get the word out about a cause or issue, or write a blog or post comments on a blog about a cause or issue. In addition, most had used text messages to support or get the word out about an issue or a cause, or to participate in or recruit others for an in-person activity or event. These spaces facilitated civic involvement for a substantial number of LGBT youth who were not involved in person.

Future Directions for Research

This report expands greatly our understanding of the experiences of LGBT youth online. One consistent difficulty in studying the experiences of LGBT youth—whether online or in person—is that so little is known about the general LGBT population, due to the absence of large, population-based studies that include specific items about LGBT identity among youth. This study has relied on one of the largest and most representative samples of LGBT youth currently available, but in some instances limited subsample sizes may have hindered our ability to attain more nuanced understandings of LGBT youth. Future national, large-scale studies should collect information on sexual orientation and gender identity, as well as about online and in-person experiences, to examine possible differences between subpopulation groups.

Interestingly, some personal and contextual factors (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender, location) were associated with different patterns of online behavior. LGBT youth of color were more likely to have searched for some types of information online, but in some cases less likely to have used the Internet to connect with other LGBT people online. Male and transgender youth were more likely than other LGB youth to have searched for information online and to have connected with other LGBT people online. Rural youth were more likely to have come out online and be more out online, despite having lower access to the Internet overall. Future research should continue to explore these trends as well as examine the intersection of multiple identities. Additional research should examine how specific characteristics operate in different spaces and how they encourage or discourage some activities online.

Finally, some additional qualitative data is needed to better understand how LGBT youth navigate the school environment and access LGBT-related resources.¹²⁰ The importance of school-based Internet access may be heightened in some areas of the country, such as those with less reliable home Internet access and with greater concentrations of poverty. Thus, researchers need to acknowledge the importance of schools as sites of access for some youth and further examine how censorship might impede LGBT youth development in these places. Together, these recommendations suggest that future research continue to clarify the purposes for which LGBT youth go online, and how these practices differ by individual and contextual factors.

Recommendations for Policy and Practice

These findings also demonstrate a clear need for greater attention by policymakers and practitioners to the experiences of LGBT youth online. Bias-based bullying targeting sexual orientation and gender expression is a problem in many areas of the country, and as this report shows, it is also widespread online. Educators, policymakers, and supporters of safe school initiatives can use the information in this report to better understand the specific experiences of LGBT youth online and take appropriate steps to make schools and other places safer and more inclusive for LGBT youth. In particular, this report suggests a need for increased attention to safety online, especially for LGBT youth. Experiences of victimization pose a clear challenge for teachers: such bullying may occur outside their supervision, but nonetheless have profound effects on student learning. Educator training programs should provide more instruction on how to prevent and address such forms of victimization. In addition, anti-bullying/harassment policies may need to do more to protect youth against Internet-based harassment. Policies should aim to provide protections beyond traditional, in-person forms of bullying and harassment, since many youth report being bullied online or via text message while at home, in public places, and even in school.

Findings from this report also have important implications for educator practices. Substantial numbers of LGBT youth report searching for or reading about sexuality-related information online. Such findings point to the need for more comprehensive, LGBT-inclusive sex education programs for youth across the country. However, youth may potentially acquire wrong or misleading information online, to the extent that the websites they visit contain unreliable information. Practitioners may find it useful to direct LGBT youth to web resources they have vetted or to reliable sources such as the Society for Public Health Education, Sexuality Information and Education Council of the U.S. (SIECUS), the American Association for Health Education, and Advocates for Youth.

Many LGBT youth also venture online for social support, whether to reinforce their existing networks of support or to expand them. Youth who are not out offline, and youth who feel less comfortable

being LGBT in their schools or communities, may be especially reliant on online resources. As such, youth service professionals may find it helpful to encourage some youth to connect with other people online, including venues such as TrevorSpace. In addition, given the stigma that LGBT people face in many schools and communities, teachers, parents, and other adults who work with youth may recommend the use of online spaces to begin developing political expression among LGBT youth.

Finally, although access to the Internet is increasing, gaps in access remain. This report finds that rural and urban youth spend less time online via a computer at home, and more time via a computer at school, than suburban youth. Thus, practitioners need to work to ensure that computers in all schools can be used to access supportive resources, including those that are LGBT-inclusive. Together, these recommendations can help make schools and other spaces safer for all youth, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, or forms of gender expression.

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- 17 All HPOL respondents were initially weighted to known demographics of 13 to 18 year-olds based on the 2009 Current Population Survey (including on biological sex, school location, and U.S. region). Next, LGBT youth recruited through the oversample were weighted to the LGBT youth recruited through the HPOL panel; such weighting is used to statistically minimize the issue of non-randomness, to align samples so that they can be combined into one dataset, and to allow data to behave as if they are nationally representative. After it was determined that the demographic weighting alone did not bring GLSEN and HPOL LGBT youth into alignment, a propensity weight was created to adjust for behavioral and attitudinal differences between the two groups so that GLSEN and HPOL LGBT subsamples each account for 50% of the combined LGBT population sample.
- 18 "Female" includes participants who selected only female as their gender, and "male" includes participants who selected only male. The category "transgender" includes participants who selected transgender, male-to-female, or female-to-male as their gender, including those who selected more than one of these categories. Participants who selected both male and female were categorized as "other" (e.g., genderqueer, androgynous).
- 19 The term "cisgender" refers to a person whose gender identity is aligned with their sex assigned at birth (e.g., someone who is not transgender).
- 20 Participants who selected more than one category were coded as "multiracial", with the exception of participants who selected "Hispanic or Latino" or "Middle Eastern or Arab American".
- 21 To test differences between LGBT and non-LGBT youth in daily internet use, a between-group t-test was conducted. The effect for identifying as LGBT was significant: $t=6.367, p<.001$.
- 22 Based on a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) of the number of hours per day spent online via various devices: LGBT youth spent the most time online via a computer at home, followed by a cell phone, followed by a computer at school, followed by a video game console, followed by a portable gaming device or a computer at work. Pillai's trace=.637, $F(5, 1723)=604.020, p<.001$. Univariate effects were significant at the $p<.001$ level, except for the difference between a video game console and portable gaming device, which was significant at the $p<.05$ level.
- 23 Respondents were not asked about tablet computers, which were released in April, 2010, following the development of the survey instrument.
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- 25 In this study, "offline" and "in person" are used interchangeably.
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- 27 Based on paired sample comparison tests. LGBT youth were more likely to not feel safe at school than at work ($t=19.604, p<.001$), home ($t=10.850, p<.001$), or a place of worship ($t=5.205, p<.001$). Youth were more likely to not feel safe online than at work ($t=18.417, p<.001$), home ($t=9.394, p<.001$), or a place of worship ($t=4.573, p<.001$). They were more likely to not feel safe going to and from school than at work ($t=20.341, p<.001$), home ($t=11.414, p<.001$), or a place of worship ($t=5.929, p<.001$). They were more likely to not feel safe at a place of worship than at work ($t=14.598, p<.001$) or home ($t=4.845, p<.001$). Rates of not feeling safe at school, online, or to and from school were not different from one another.
- 28 Here and elsewhere in this section, "not feeling safe" refers to youth who felt extremely or somewhat unsafe in a given location, or neither safe nor unsafe.
- 29 E.g., Rowatt, W. C., LaBouff, J., Johnson, M., Froese, P., & Tsang, J.-A. (2009). Associations among religiousness, social attitudes, and prejudice in a national random sample of American adults. *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality, 1*(1), 14-24.
- 30 Based on a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) of the feelings of safety in various places between LGBT and non-LGBT respondents: LGBT youth felt less safe than non-LGBT youth in every location. Pillai's trace=.108, $F(6, 1438)=29.09, p<.001$. Univariate effects were significant at the $p<.001$ level.
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- 32 Based on a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) of the frequency of bullying via various media: LGBT youth most frequently experienced bullying in person, followed by online, followed by text message, followed by phone call. Pillai's trace=.356, $F(3, 1728)=318.621, p<.001$. Univariate effects were significant at the $p<.001$ level.
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- 34 Online and text message-based experiences are given more prominence in this report than traditional phones, due to an interest in examining the "electronic" experiences of youth.
- 35 Based on a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) of the frequency of bullying via various media between LGBT and non-LGBT respondents: LGBT youth experienced higher rates of bullying than non-LGBT youth in every mode. Pillai's trace=.464, $F(4, 5732)=1239.207, p<.001$. Univariate effects were significant at the $p<.001$ level.
- 36 Kosciw, J. G., Greytak, E. A., Bartkiewicz, M. J., Boesen, M. J., & Palmer, N. A. (2012). *The 2011 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth in our nation's schools*. New York: GLSEN.
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Rainie, L., & Wellman, B. (2012). *Networked: The new social operating system*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

- 38 e.g., New York Department of Education Chancellor's Regulation A-412.
- O'Gorman, J. (2013, February 19). Bill calls for school cellphone ban. *Rutland Herald*. Retrieved from <http://www.rutlandherald.com/article/20130219/NEWS01/702199826>
- 39 Based on paired sample comparison tests of the percentage of LGBT youth who said they had experienced bullying because of sexual orientation or gender expression in a given space via a particular mode. LGBT youth were more likely to have experienced bullying because of sexual orientation or gender expression online while home than at school ($t=30.089$, $p<.001$) or to and from school ($t=64.271$, $p<.001$). They were more likely to have experienced bullying because of sexual orientation or gender expression online while at school than traveling to and from school ($t=8.518$, $p<.001$). They were more likely to have experienced bullying because of sexual orientation or gender expression via text message while home than at school ($t=12.393$, $p<.001$) or to and from school ($t=12.480$, $p<.001$). They were equally likely to have experienced bullying because of sexual orientation or gender expression via text message while at school or traveling to and from school ($t=1.153$, $p>.10$).
- 40 Based on paired sample comparison tests using the percentage of LGBT youth who had been sexually harassed via any mode. LGBT youth were more likely to have been sexually harassed at home than at school ($t=9.080$, $p<.001$) or to and from school ($t=29.262$, $p<.001$). They were more likely to have been sexually harassed at school than to and from school ($t=18.071$, $p<.001$).
- 41 Based on a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) of the frequency of sexual harassment via various media between LGBT and non-LGBT respondents: LGBT youth experienced higher rates of sexual harassment than non-LGBT youth in every mode. Pillai's trace=.114, $F(4, 5444)=643.388$, $p<.001$. Univariate effects were significant at the $p<.001$ level.
- 42 Eisenberg, M. E., Neumark-Sztainer, D., & Perry, C. L. (2003). Peer harassment, school connectedness, and academic achievement. *Journal of School Health*, 73(8), 311-316.
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- 44 For purposes of parsimony, "depression" in this report refers to levels of depressive symptomatology.
- 45 Bullying was assessed by asking youth, "In the past 12 months, how often were you bullied or harassed by someone about your age?" Youth who had been bullied at least once per month were classified as experiencing more frequent bullying; youth who had experienced bullying once or a few times in the past year or not at all were classified as experiencing less frequent bullying.
- 46 To test differences in GPA by frequency of online bullying, an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted with GPA as the dependent variable, frequency of online bullying as the independent variable, and in-person and text-based bullying as covariates. The main effect for frequency of online bullying was significant: $F(1, 1697)=16.959$, $p<.001$.
- To test differences in GPA by frequency of text-based bullying, an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted with GPA as the dependent variable, frequency of text-based bullying as the independent variable, and in-person and online bullying as covariates. The main effect for frequency of text-based bullying was not significant: $F(1, 1697)=1.123$, $p>.05$.
- 47 To test differences in GPA by mode of bullying, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted with GPA as the dependent variable and profile of victimization as the independent variable. The main effect profile of victimization was significant: $F(3, 1934)=7.81$, $p<.001$. Bonferroni post-hoc tests indicated that youth who experienced bullying both in person and online/text reported the lowest GPAs.
- 48 Self-esteem is measured using the ten-item Likert-type Rosenberg self-esteem scale:
- Rosenberg, M. (1989). *Society and the adolescent self-image* (Revised ed.) Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press.
- Respondents were asked how much they agree with statements about their global self-worth (e.g., "On the whole, I am satisfied with myself"). Cronbach's $\alpha=.921$.

- 49 Depression was measured using the 20-item Likert-type Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression scale (CES-D):

Radloff, L. S. (1977). The CES-D scale: A self-report depression scale for research in the general population. *Applied psychological measurement*, 1(3), 385-401.

Respondents were asked about the frequency with which they experienced depressive symptoms (e.g., "I lost interest in my usually activities"). Cronbach's $\alpha=.923$.
- 50 To test differences in depression by frequency of online bullying, an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted with depression as the dependent variable, frequency of online bullying as the independent variable, and in-person and text-based bullying as covariates. The main effect for frequency of online bullying was significant: $F(1, 1727)=7.363, p<.01$.

To test differences in self-esteem by frequency of online bullying, an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted with self-esteem as the dependent variable, frequency of online bullying as the independent variable, and in-person and text-based bullying as covariates. The main effect for frequency of online bullying was significant: $F(1, 1727)=26.003, p<.001$.
- 51 To test differences in depression by frequency of text-based bullying, an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted with depression as the dependent variable, frequency of text-based bullying as the independent variable, and in-person and online bullying as covariates. The main effect for frequency of text-based bullying was not significant: $F(1, 1727)=1.156, p>.05$.

To test differences in self-esteem by frequency of text-based bullying, an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted with self-esteem as the dependent variable, frequency of text-based bullying as the independent variable, and in-person and online bullying as covariates. The main effect for frequency of text-based bullying was not significant: $F(1, 1727)=1.088, p>.05$.
- 52 To test differences in depression by profile of bullying, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted with depression as the dependent variable, and profile of bullying as the independent variable. The main effect profile of bullying was significant: $F(3, 1956)=42.79, p<.001$. Bonferroni post-hoc tests indicated that youth who experienced bullying both in person and online/text reported the highest levels of depression.

To test differences in self-esteem by profile of bullying, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted with self-esteem as the dependent variable, and profile of bullying as the independent variable. The main effect profile of bullying was significant: $F(3, 1956)=53.43, p<.001$. Bonferroni post-hoc tests indicated that youth who experienced bullying both in person and online/text reported the lowest levels of self-esteem.
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- 65 Based on paired sample comparison tests of the number of close online and in-person friends (using a condensed 6-point scale). LGBT youth said they had significantly more in-person friends than online friends ($t=50.073$, $p<.001$).
- 66 To test differences in number of online friends between LGBT and non-LGBT youth, a between-group t-test (using a condensed 6-point scale) was conducted. LGBT youth had significantly more online friends than non-LGBT youth ($t=18.925$, $p<.001$).
- 67 boyd, d. m. (2008). Why youth (heart) social network sites: The role of networked publics in teenage social life. In D. Buckingham (Ed.), *Youth, Identity, and Digital Media* (pp. 119-142). The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Series on Digital Media and Learning. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
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Zimet, G. D., Dahlem, N. W., Zimet, S. G., & Farley, G. K. (1988). The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 52(1), 30-41.

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To test differences in quality of social support between LGBT and non-LGBT youth, a between-group t-test (using a scale composed of 4 7-point items) was conducted. LGBT youth rated their online friends more supportively than did non-LGBT youth ($t=9.565$, $p<.001$).

Here and elsewhere, respondents who said their friends, on average, were good at providing support (i.e., who scored positively on the scale) were classified as having "strong support."
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- 79 Based on paired sample comparison tests of engaging in political activity via text message (using a dichotomous variable). LGBT youth were more likely to support or get the word out about an issue than participate in or recruit people for a gathering ($t=20.914$, $p<.001$).
- 80 Based on a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) of the frequency of internet use for political purposes between LGBT and non-LGBT respondents: LGBT youth reported higher rates of online and text-based civic participation than non-LGBT youth for every type of activity. Pillai's trace=.193, $F(6, 5535)=221.08$, $p<.001$. Univariate effects were significant at the $p<.001$ level.
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- 84 To test differences in time spent online by race/ethnicity, a multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) was conducted with time spent online via various electronic devices as the dependent variables, race/ethnicity as the independent variable, and income as a covariate. The multivariate effect was significant: Pillai's trace=.095, $F(24, 6880)=6.996$, $p<.001$. The univariate effects for race/ethnicity were significant for computer at home: $F(4, 1722)=19.765$, $p<.001$; cell phone: $F(4, 1722)=4.440$, $p<.001$; computer at school: $F(4, 1722)=6.234$, $p<.01$; video game console: $F(4, 1722)=2.935$, $p<.05$; portable gaming device: $F(4, 1722)=10.226$, $p<.001$; and computer at work: $F(4, 1722)=3.507$, $p<.01$. Bonferroni post-hoc tests indicated that Asian American and African American LGBT youth spent more time online than White and Hispanic youth via computers at home. Asian American LGBT youth spent the most time online via cell phones.
- To test differences in the total amount of time spent online by race/ethnicity, an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted with total amount of time spent online as the dependent variable, race/ethnicity as the independent variable, and income as a covariate. The main effect for race/ethnicity was significant: $F(4, 1922)=22.689$, $p<.001$. Bonferroni post-hoc tests indicated that overall, African American and Asian American youth spent the most time online after controlling for income, followed by youth of "other" races, followed by White and Hispanic youth.
- 85 Kosciw, J. G., Greytak, E. A., Bartkiewicz, M. J., Boesen, M. J., & Palmer, N. A. (2012). *The 2011 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth in our nation's schools*. New York: GLSEN.
- 86 To test differences in the frequency of online bullying by race/ethnicity, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted with frequency of online bullying as the dependent variable and race/ethnicity as the independent variable. The main effect for race/ethnicity was significant: $F(4, 1925)=9.811$, $p<.001$. Bonferroni post-hoc tests indicated that White and "other" race LGBT youth experienced greater levels of online bullying than Asian American and Hispanic youth.
- To test differences in the frequency of text-based bullying by race/ethnicity, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted with frequency of text-based bullying as the dependent variable and race/ethnicity as the independent variable. The main effect for race/ethnicity was significant: $F(4, 1925)=9.811$, $p<.001$. Bonferroni post-hoc tests indicated that White and "other" race LGBT youth experienced greater levels of text-based bullying than Hispanic youth.
- 87 Based on Bonferroni post-hoc tests in the preceding ANOVAs.
- 88 A chi-square test was conducted to compare the percentage of LGBT youth across race/ethnicity that had searched for information online about sexuality or sexual attraction: $\chi^2=10.870$, $df=4$, $p<.05$, $\Phi=.075$. However, individual cells across race/ethnicity were not different from one another.
- A chi-square test was conducted to compare the percentage of LGBT youth across race/ethnicity that had searched for health or medical information online: $\chi^2=4.290$, $df=4$, $p>.05$, $\Phi=.047$.
- A chi-square test was conducted to compare the percentage of youth across race/ethnicity that had searched for information online about HIV/AIDS and other STIs: $\chi^2=41.306$, $df=4$, $p<.001$, $\Phi=.146$. African American, Asian American, and Hispanic youth reported the highest rates of searching for information on STIs.
- 89 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. HIV surveillance in youth and young adults. Available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/topics/surveillance/resources/slides/adolescents/index.htm>.
- 90 A chi-square test was conducted to compare mode of greater outness by race/ethnicity: $\chi^2=49.025$, $df=12$, $p<.001$, $F=.160$. Adjusted p -values indicated that Hispanic youth were less likely than White youth to say they were equally out online and in person. In addition, Asian American youth were least likely to be out to someone else; followed by African American youth; followed by Hispanic youth, White youth, and youth with another race/ethnicity. Other differences by race/ethnic group were not statistically significant.
- 91 To test differences in frequency of talking to other LGBT people online by race/ethnicity, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted with frequency of talking to other LGBT people online as the dependent variable and race/ethnicity as the independent variable. The main effect for race/ethnicity was not significant: $F(4, 1925)=2.088$, $p>.05$.

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- 93 A chi-square test was conducted to compare the percentage of youth across race/ethnicity who had participated online in the past year: $\chi^2=17.459$, $df=4$, $p<.01$, $\Phi=.095$. However, individual cells across race/ethnicity were not different from one another.
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To test differences in the total amount of time spent online by gender, an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted with total amount of time spent online as the dependent variable, gender as the independent variable, and income as a covariate. The main effect for gender was not significant: $F(3, 1954)=.99$, $p>.05$.
- 101 To test differences in online victimization by gender identity, two analyses of variance (ANOVA) were conducted with online and text-based victimization as the dependent variables, and gender identity as the independent variable. The main effect of gender for online victimization was significant: $F(3, 1956)=9.42$, $p<.001$. The main effect for text-based victimization was significant: $F(3, 1956)=8.61$, $p<.001$. Bonferroni post-hoc tests indicated that females, transgender, and other gender youth experienced lower online victimization than cisgender GB males. In addition, cisgender LGB females and other gender youth exhibited higher text-based victimization than cisgender GB males.
- 102 To test differences in searching for health and medical information by gender, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted with searching for health and medical information online as the dependent variable and gender as the independent variable. The main effect for gender was significant: $F(3, 1956)=12.17$, $p<.001$. Bonferroni post-hoc tests indicated that transgender youth were more likely than other LGB youth to have searched for such information.
- 103 To test differences in searching for information on HIV/AIDS and other STIs online by gender, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted with searching for information on HIV/AIDS and other STIs online as the dependent variable and gender as the independent variable. The main effect for gender was significant: $F(3, 1956)=28.36$, $p<.001$. Bonferroni post-hoc tests indicated that transgender and cisgender male LGB youth were most likely to have searched for such information, followed by LGB youth with other genders, followed by cisgender female LGBT youth.
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- 108 To test differences in rates of online civic participation by gender, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted with the rate of online civic participation as the dependent variable and gender as the independent variable. The main effect for gender was not significant: $F(3, 1956)=1.80$, $p>.05$.
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To test differences in the total amount of time spent online by locale, an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted with total amount of time spent online as the dependent variable, locale as the independent variable, and family income as a covariate. The main effect for locale was significant: $F(2, 1724)=11.335$, $p<.001$. Bonferroni post-hoc tests indicated that rural LGBT youth spent the least amount of time online.
- 114 Palmer, N. A., Kosciw, J. G., & Bartkiewicz, M. J. (2012). *Strengths and silences: The school experiences of LGBT students in rural and small town schools*. New York: GLSEN.
- 115 To test differences in the frequency of online bullying by locale, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted with frequency of online bullying as the dependent variable and locale as the independent variable. The main effect for locale was significant: $F(2, 1927)=22.880$, $p<.001$. Bonferroni post-hoc tests indicated that rural LGBT youth experienced greater levels of online bullying than suburban and urban youth.

To test differences in the frequency of text-based bullying by locale, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted with frequency of text-based bullying as the dependent variable and locale as the independent variable. The main effect for locale was significant: $F(2, 1927)=16.221$, $p<.001$. Bonferroni post-hoc tests indicated that rural LGBT youth experienced greater levels of text-based bullying than suburban and urban youth.
- 116 A chi-square test was conducted to compare the percentage of youth across locales that had searched for information online about sexuality or sexual attraction: $\chi^2=11.467$ $df=2$, $p<.01$, $\Phi=.077$. Suburban youth were more likely than rural youth to have searched for such information.

A chi-square test was conducted to compare the percentage of youth across locales that had searched for health or medical information online: $\chi^2=4.388$ $df=2$, $p>.05$, $\Phi=.048$.

A chi-square test was conducted to compare the percentage of youth across locales that had searched for information online about HIV/AIDS and other STIs: $\chi^2=4.300$ $df=2$, $p>.05$, $\Phi=.047$.

- 117 A chi-square test was conducted to compare mode of greater outness by locale: $\chi^2=10.328$, $df=6$, $p>.05$, $F=.074$. Adjusted p -values indicated that rural LGBT youth were more likely to be more out online than urban and suburban youth. Rural, suburban, and urban youth were not different from one another in other respects.
- 118 To test differences in frequency of talking to other LGBT people online by locale, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted with frequency of talking to other LGBT people online as the dependent variable and locale as the independent variable. The main effect for locale was not significant: $F(2, 1927)=1.465$, $p>.05$.
- 119 A chi-square test was conducted to compare the percentage of LGBT youth across locales who had participated online in the past year: $\chi^2=13.135$, $df=2$, $p<.001$, $\Phi=.082$. Suburban LGBT youth were most likely to have participated online.
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90 Broad Street, 2nd Floor
New York, NY 10004
Ph: 212.727.0135
Fax: 212.727.0254
www.glsen.org

